THE CHARM OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

JAMES REID MARSH

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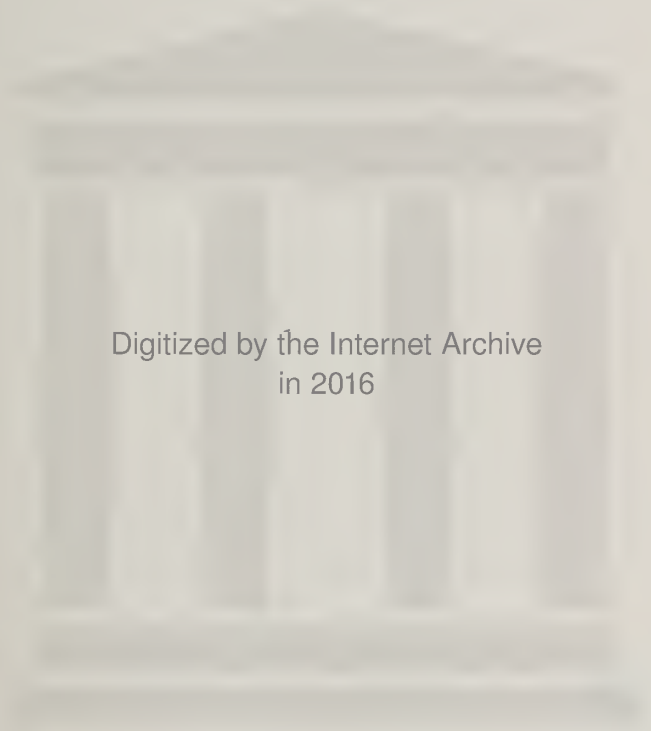
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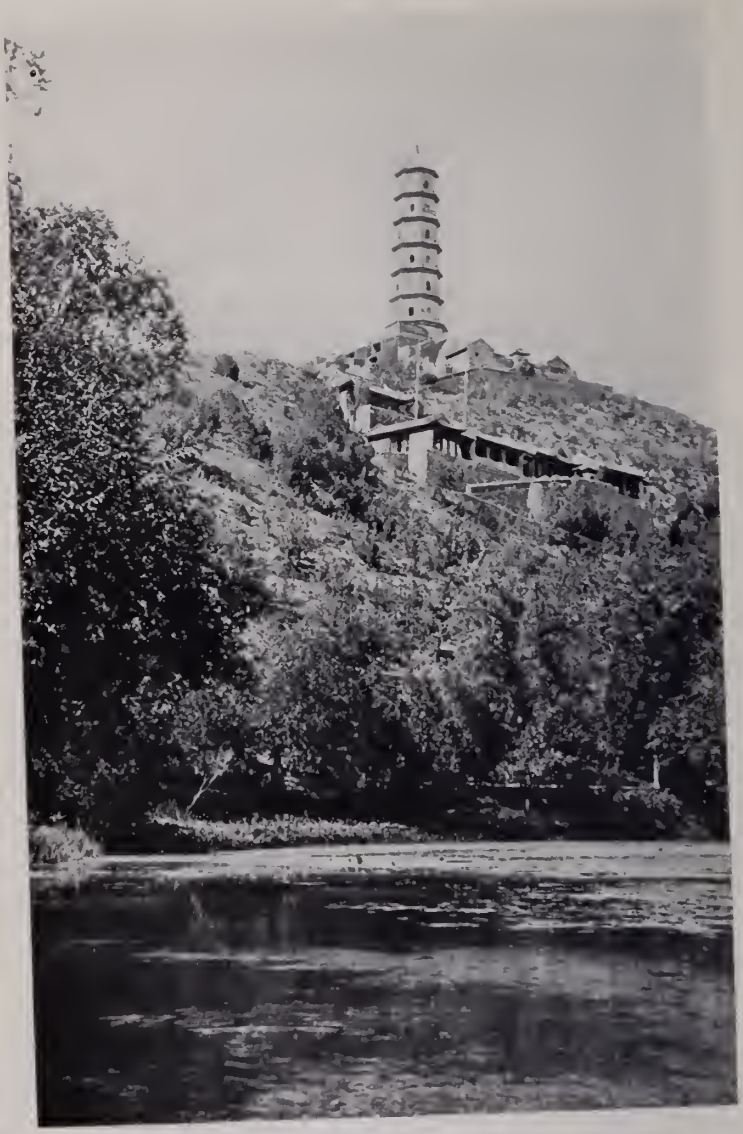
THE CHARM OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

"A, Lord!" thought I, "that madest us,
Yet saw I never swich noblesse
Of ymages, ne swich richesse, . . .
But not woot I who dide hem wirche,
Ner wher I am, ne in what contree.
But now wol I go out and see,
Right at the wyket, yif I can
See o-wher any steryng man,
That may me telle wher I am."

Chaucer's *House of Fame.*

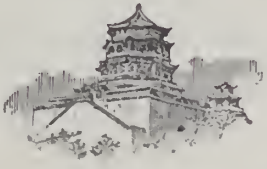


PAGODA IN WESTERN HILLS, PEKING

Frontispiece

THE CHARM OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

By
JAMES REID MARSH



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

JEANNETTE PHILLIPS GIBBS

AND

ARTHUR HAMILTON GIBBS

WITHOUT WHOSE FRIENDLY COUNSEL AND ENCOURAGEMENT
THIS BOOK WOULD PROBABLY NOT HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN.

FOREWORD

The lady was wearing a scarlet skirt with a very long coat of the same material when the boy first saw her. She was standing on the brink of the Grand Cañon, watching the sun splash the stone battleship with every conceivable color, but mostly red, a hue only less brilliant than her skirt. The boy was on the brink of the Cañon, too. He was prone on his stomach, dipping his head into nearly immeasurable depths, for he had just loosened a rock from the shelving where he lay, and was watching it fall, and afterwards, when it had merged with the reddish brown of the landscape, listening for its impingement on the cliffs below.

Finally, after his experiment, for it was an experiment and reminiscent of the days when he had wrestled with the vagaries of falling bodies, the boy stood up, his face aglow with appreciation of the rich panorama that stretched before him. He was standing perilously near the edge of the world, for that was what it amounted to. He could not have taken a

fraction of a step without being savagely hurtled into space. And this it was that constrained the lady to speak to him. She had been waiting some moments, as if for him to turn of his own accord, for she was afraid of startling him with a word.

Just as the boy turned she said, "The days of fairies are past, you know. It has happened before,—shelves crumbling away, I mean. If you want to prolong your journey, you had better keep away from the edge of things."

The boy turned quickly, startled at the sound of her voice, for he had had no intimation of her coming. He reddened under the directness of her gaze and after what seemed to him an infinity of silence answered, "I suppose it was foolish of me. And as for my journey, that has scarcely begun."

"Then you are going far?"

"Just underneath," he replied. And then he added, as if in extenuation of what he deemed a cryptic remark, "China. I started digging for it once, you know."

Of course she did not know, but somehow he had felt immediately familiar with the lady. The boy could not understand why he should have felt this way; although the lady did. She had long cultivated the art of being familiar.

"And you have decided to go round instead," she interpolated with a winning smile.

"Yes," he answered. "You see a chum and I were only seven years old when we commenced digging, and I don't suppose we should have gotten farther down than a mile by now. The pit caved in on us one day, and that was the end of it. And now I am actually going there! It seems incredible."

"Nor did I ever expect to," she countered, placing the top of her swagger stick between her pretty red lips and looking at him demurely, with only the glimmer of a smile.

"Then you have been to China!" the boy exclaimed with a kind of childish surprise.

"Ummm," the lady replied, enjoying his consternation with every ounce of her feminine subtlety. "And I'm on my way back, too."

"Then we shall travel together," the boy burst out with a frankness and spontaneity that were especially pleasing to the lady in scarlet.

"That depends," she said, thrusting the swagger stick once more between her pretty red lips. "What boat are you taking? Do you sail from Frisco?"

"Yes, Frisco," he quickly replied, as if for that reason it must be by the identical steamer.

"And the ship?" she asked, not a little impatiently.

"*Persia Maru*," he replied, with his eyes fastened on hers. He must have been trying to divine the truth by the sober light that shone from them. Had he been a man and experienced in the ways of women he could have accomplished his task. It was scarcely necessary that the lady should speak. For the answer was written plainly on her face. In the end she laughed at the boy's confusion and said, "What wonderful luck!"

"You have never been away from home before," she continued, rather than asked.

"Oh, I have been on ships making voyages into the Caribbean," he answered carelessly. It was evident that he wanted to impress her, if he could, with his worldliness. But from the nature of her reply it was equally evident that he had failed to accomplish this very youngish desire.

"I see I'll have to take you in hand," she said. "You can't go out there and break your legs like a colt that's put too early to pasture. Do you greatly mind if I try? I think I'll succeed. If there's a single word that comes to my mind more forcefully than any other it is tolerance. Be sure you understand before you condemn. Don't build your shell until

you are sure what you want it to be. The average man builds his about thirty. Most women's are built by nature. So there you are. I think we had better be getting back to the train. It leaves within the hour."

The boy had an impulse to thank the lady for all she had said to him, but when he considered that perhaps she had a lot more to say, and that there was to be a sufficiency of time permitted them on the ocean journey, he only acquiesced. They walked side by side, hardly venturing to speak until they reached the veranda, when she turned to him, put out her hand, almost impulsively, or so it seemed to the boy, and said, "This has been an extremely pleasant afternoon. You see, I am a sportswoman and have a reputation for picking winners. Of course, even wins may be flukes, and I have learned not to stake my last penny on anything, no, not even on character. But that is neither here nor there. I'll see you on the train. Perhaps it's not being worth your while. Yes? Au revoir, then."

The boy saw the lady on the train, but the talks they had there were not nearly so intimate as those that came later on the ship.

Of course, there were a multitude of subjects on which the lady could only touch cursorily.

After all, one can't, to use her very words, anticipate experience.

"I simply want you to have a healthy attitude of mind," she would say. "You remember the old Latin proverb, '*Sequi naturam.*' But how few realize what an extremely difficult art it is to follow nature, as if one were natural by instinct! The animals may be, and man undoubtedly once was, but the farther he gets away from the ones who lived in trees the farther he gets from the truth of the flesh, which, after all, is not the truth of the spirit. They are separate, don't you see. The reason animals make such a success of life is because they haven't spirits. They can't mix their drinks, so to speak, and get intoxicated with themselves. But ever since the garden of Eden man has been mixing his drinks and woman's too, and a sorry mess he has made of them! The *summum bonum* of all my advice becomes, don't mix your drinks. You don't understand, do you? But you will some day. Never fear, you will."

The steamer had dropped anchor off Woosung, which is the place where the Yangtze widens one of its mouths before embrowning the sea. It was in the smaller hours of the morning and a big tender came down the river to take those disembarking at Shanghai to the

jetty. The boy wanted to bid the lady good-by, but in the confusion of taking off baggage he had completely lost trace of her.

He distinctly remembers standing near the after hatch of the tender watching the multitudinous lights of the liner blur into a nearly indistinguishable whole. Then he heard a big man grunt contemptuously. He looked down into the hatch, and there on a pile of tumbled mattresses he saw the lady in scarlet peacefully sleeping. There seemed to be no one else about, and unquestionably she had gotten there alone. But the boy cannot help recalling how he resented the contemptuous grunt of the big man near the hatch. For the lady had been true blue to him, and he will always remember her as she lay there, her long scarlet cloak gathered snugly about her form, her scarlet skirt, fringed with a brownish fur, just showing beneath the cloak, and her head bare, with the brown tresses flowing about her brow as they did that day near the edge of the world.

In another instant she was gone, and the land of dreams had become a land of reality. If the boy has acquired any understanding of the world at all, he owes it in no little part to the lady in scarlet, and though she must, by the commonest courtesy, be forever nameless,

he hopes that this will come to her hand, and that she will feel that life has not been so utterly in vain as she might otherwise be tempted to believe.

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For many of the excellent photographs reproduced in this volume the author is indebted to his friend of China days, Albert P. Ludwig, of St. Anthony, Idaho.

THE CHARM OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

THE CHARM OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

CHAPTER I

For seven centuries the charm and glory of the Middle Kingdom have dripped out of the eastern world like the light of early stars from the vaulted blue at night. Lily feet, almond eyes and sinuous black hair, with shimmering embroidered silks somewhere between, have stolen away and benumbed countless human hearts, as the poppy's juice is said to steal away and benumb the faculties of the brain. I, like so many others, have felt, "Romance is dead." And I have lived to chase it over the rim of the world, across the widest sea, until it stood and delivered.

The big steamer coasts along Japan, touching at the three principal ports. But somehow one fails to be impressed, though one is variously pleased, to be sure. Not until he is many hours out of Nagasaki does the traveler

begin to sense something akin to impending romance. As the ship sweeps over the continental shelf of the most prolific country on earth he notices that the sea has taken on a soberer hue. Whereas before the waters were active, flashing green and white, with the waves curling over one another with a certain eternal resiliency, now they have become a deep brownish yellow, almost muddy. It seems that the great ship must momently dig her nose into the soft earth and be made a prisoner by this plastic moving mass.

But the steel prow cuts vigorously on, though the waters are still, and when the traveler goes to the stern and looks into the wake, instead of beholding a frothy nectar whirling away to the sky he sees a heavy liquid angrily churning like a gigantic caldron of boiling mud. For China has not waited, like the Flowery Kingdom, for the world to come to her. China runs sixty miles out to sea to utter her sober warning. And the traveler leaning over the rail must heed it, though he have not a spark of youth in his blood. The great Yellow Sea descends on him like a prelude to an Oriental night, and he shudders, while his nerves tingle with the lust for things untried, for the subterranean places of the earth, where life is inverted, and where he

can gaze on the primeval passions of the world.

By and by a junk more daring than the others flashes into view. She flits dangerously near the course of her iron sister out of the east. The captain of the big ship is manifestly disturbed. There is a bawling of orders cut short by the deafening roar of the sirens. But the junk bobs out of reach as the modern leviathan plows her unchecked course. The traveler peers eagerly down into the faces of the little crew. He scans them as he would the pictures in a fabled story book.

There is a rat-like running to and fro, a weird, unmusical, and yet not utterly unmusical chant, that by a stretch of fancy might be mistaken for a language, a hasty change of the course, while a group of rowers man the big sweep oar and with feverish haste sidle their craft out of the sucking maelstrom under the stern. For an instant, only an instant, the traveler glimpses the little yellow faces with the black braids wound around the tops of their heads like so many victims in the Adventure of the Speckled Band. Some laugh, displaying yellow teeth, only a shade less sallow than the skin stretching like drumheads over the hidden bones. Others make no effort to conceal the terror clutching at their hearts,

for all are poor men, and the fear of death is heavily upon them.

It may be only a fishing craft, or again it may be that the hold of the junk is heavily laden with the stuff that steals into men's brains, slowly atrophying the intellect and all the nicer faculties. For opium running is still the great adventure. Nor does the wealthy foreigner, whose gold has only accentuated his desire, hesitate to empty his coffers into the trade; for his name need never appear, and he can lounge over his coffee in a sumptuously appointed club and mentally calculate his gain.

But the great ship rushes on, and almost instantly the junk is dancing away to the windward, though now that she is out of reach of the devil from over the sea, one or two of her crew wave their hands, a barely distinguishable fluttering like one shade of yellow over another less deep. In time whole fleets of junks spring into view. I purposely say spring into view because, what with the yellow of the sea and the yellow of the hulls and the sails, it is impossible to distinguish these craft until they are nearly upon you. The traveler feels himself growing impatient. His skin is delightfully a-tingle. China has already commenced to work her stupendous will, and the yellow waters are only an omen

BUND AND CONSULATES AT SHANGHAI

MR. LUDWIG TRAVELLING DE LUXE

of the yellow race, as if one should see green before catching a glimpse of some mighty jungle waste.

The air grows heavy, too, and oppressive, in a sort of delectable way, with mystery, the mystery of the earlier centuries of mankind. The wind has died away and the only sound that breaks the silence of the deep is the occasional swish of the waveless sea as it falls away from the ship, gaining momentum for another quiet assault. The sky is a burning yellow haze with the sun shining through it like an arc light through a mist of rain. The traveler has not yet changed his clothes. He is still wearing wool. But as he watches the indeterminate sun he involuntarily drops his fingers to the hem of his coat and rustles the cloth until suddenly he realizes that his hands are wet. Which reminds him that his collar is wilted.

In a little while, perhaps about four in the afternoon, when the sun has dropped perilously near the earth and the yellow haze seems concentrated on the edge of the sea, a dark brown line, a wavy rushlike line, makes itself manifest just between the haze and the yellow waters. The traveler has never seen such a phenomenon before, but when he cudgels his brain he remembers crossing the Gulf of

Mexico and suddenly seeing land come up like a reef hitherto submerged. He adjusts his binoculars and looks fixedly at the line until he sees it move, wave, as it were. And then he knows that this is land, that this is the shore of the Middle Kingdom.

He inquires of a passing officer to substantiate his find. And the officer tells him that their destination is far in behind that line of waving grass. So he must go still farther in! The Celestial Kingdom is only displaying itself by degrees. First came the sea, and now this line of brownish waving grass. What next? The pulse of the traveler beats faster. He feels the customs of the western world sloughing off him like the leaves of deciduous plants. He feels himself becoming a pagan, and he is prone to wonder just how completely the great forces of this older world will have him in their power. For it is a power that encompasses one on every side, as a breakwater encompasses the sea.

There is an escape, but like the escape from the breakwater, it is small, nearly invisible. But the traveler feels no regret that he cannot escape. He has come a long way and previously made up his mind that his fingers shall clutch at everything, that even the minutest experience shall not pass him by. And in

reaching this conclusion he has done wisely, for the mountain has never yet been known to come to Mahomet, and if Mahomet would penetrate the secrets of the mountain only one course is open. The ravines of the world are deep and inaccessible to all except those who abide in them and that other small company of gifted souls who have a vision of the ubiquitous nature of man.

"I will cast this cloak from me and put on another," said the prophet Narma-khan, "for in this wise shall I deceive the king who believes that nothing is so interesting as the exterior of man. And in this he shows great wisdom. Otherwise he were not king."

The great ship crept along, and I found myself not unlike my fairy traveler, who after all is not a fairy but every one who shows the wisdom of the prophet Narma-khan. I, too, felt the magic of the East creeping like Lethe, almost insidiously, into my bones. This experience, which was to be the greatest one of my life, had already risen like Constantine's cross in the upper arc of the heavens. I, too, could see the writing on the wall, and shall I own that I was courageous enough, or should I say weak enough, to read? As I look back on it now and catch the glamor of the vision I must affirm that it was not owing to weakness.

Nor was it altogether a matter of courage, but rather one of destiny, which a man might as well try to avoid as to flutter upwards from the highest peak of the Alps.

It was evening, and the sun had gone down in a quiet blast of heat, gone down to India, coasting along the further Himalayas, dipping into Turkestan and visiting every imaginable country the mention of whose name brings mystery and charm to literature and childhood and the blood of men. We had suddenly come in sight of one of the mouths of the Yangtze, the mighty river that is partially responsible for the Yellow Sea; for the silt and loess accumulated year by year are being continuously borne from the hinterland to be vomited into the unresisting deep. The steamer had come to anchor and I saw a variety of small craft of every conceivable color and design circling in and about the delta. A little way to the right, on the end of what appeared to be a peninsula, stood a beacon that burned steadily, sending a yellow glare over the mouth of the river and looking for all the world like the low-hung moon. The liner swung ceaselessly with the tide. Now we were pointing out to the Yellow Sea, as if we were homeward bound, and now the swell of the undertow seemed to push us silently toward the

land. The gong rang for dinner, but I stood like one enchanted, trying to anticipate the future, delving deep into history and conjuring up New Arabian Nights and all the fairy lore of my fast receding infancy.

It was with somewhat of a start that I noticed the inland sky ablaze with a whitish light. I had forgotten our port of disembarkment. A sailor passed me, carrying a bucket of dirty water. I grasped him by the arm. He looked menacingly at me for a moment, grasping the edge of the bucket tightly as if he were half of a mind to dash the contents in my face. I was not of his kind, so what should I want with him? Thus ran his reason. But I immediately pointed to the blaze of light in the distance. He followed my hand with his eyes and muttered (it sounded like muttering to me) a single word, or rather two sounds,—"Shanghai."

I turned away from him like a flash. So we had arrived! And instantly I fell to wondering what lay under that silent blaze of light. For under the light was China. Not the Yellow Sea, not an isolated junk with its crew glowering far below me, not a line of waving brownish grass, but a great city teeming with countless humans; and these humans were Chinese. I recollected the manner in which

the word had captivated my fancy. How could I eat? It was all I could do to restrain myself from hailing a passing craft and bargaining with it for a passage up the river. I afterwards found that I could have done just this. But I did not know it then, and anyhow it proved unnecessary when the big tender loomed out of the mists of the upper channel and shrieked three long whistles which were to be interpreted, "All those going ashore, stand at attention." I hurried below, for China was finally at hand.

Shanghai burst on my view with all the glamor of Oriental imagery. The bund was a flare of lights, and although I had not expected to meet with a landscape so partially European, still I was not altogether disenchanted of my dream. The jetty was crowded with sampans, or Chinese rowboats, the bulk of which clamored out to meet us, begging that we would drop our trunks over the side, and assuring us that they would fish them out of the river for the consideration of a few, oh, such a few pence. But my eyes were not for them.

Straight ahead lay the bund; and up and down it in ceaseless flow was moving a strange humanity. Here and there I could make out the garb of a European but the bulk of them

PAILOW FOR CHINESE WOMAN WHO NEVER RE-MARRIED

SIKH POLICEMAN

were Orientals, and though this part of Shanghai, which is called the new city, is not so Chinesy, if I may coin a word, as the older and distinctly Chinese section, still it was different from anything I had ever seen before. There was an atmosphere about it distinctly Eastern, though not quite richly Oriental. The majority of the populace were shuffling down the street, quietly and orderly, and only the occasional bawl of a coolie broke the deathlike stillness.

Every eye seemed to be fastened on the coming of the tender. Every heart beat in suspense until the companion ladder was lowered and the first group of passengers went down with mincing steps to the jetty. For as soon as the first man, who happened to be a woman, stepped on Chinese soil, a prolonged howl rent the night. The 'rickshaw coolies from near and far came racing down the streets, crashing into one another, dodging almost miraculously at times oncoming carriages, and last, but by no means least, evading the stout cudgels of the towering Sikh policemen who are specially imported to strike terror into the hearts of the natives.

One group of coolies bargained for the privilege of carrying my trunks, another grasped at various parts of my anatomy and tried

to shove me into twenty different vehicles at once. By a stroke of fortune I learned that my destination, the Palace Hotel, was only a few yards distant; so, giving my baggage into the hands of a native who was wearing the hotel livery, I started out into the city. But my 'rickshaw hounds pursued me to the very portals of the Palace. And even when I had set my foot finally within the door one fellow slipped up and grasped my arm in his clawlike hand, confiding in extremely broken English that there was another place only a mile away that was cheaper and every whit better than the "Pally 'Otel."

But I was in no mood to venture farther, so I dodged inside and for the time being escaped, not only from my tormentors, but from nearly every trace of the Middle Kingdom. For the Palace Hotel was built for foreigners, and though the servants, with the exception of the Eurasian clerks, are all Chinese, I found myself in an atmosphere distinctly European. So much so, in fact, that bright and early the next morning I escaped to the Orient, which is only half a mile away and very dirty and smelly until one acquires the taste, which one seldom does.

Shanghai is the city of every nation but the home of none, if, of course, we exclude the

natives who, when they go abroad, are inordinately proud of the city of their birth. I was not to remain there permanently; in fact, I learned that I was not to be anywhere permanently, but a kind of rolling stone. But there is an advantage in being a rolling stone in China. One may not gather moss,—as if that were a commendable occupation! But one does gather experience. The customs and practices of the country vary like the spoken language, and to know China one must know all of it, for the cities are strangely provincial, and the villages are tombs. I did not know at once what my next movements were to be, nor did I greatly care. My chiefest concern for the moment, and, in reality, for every subsequent moment, was to plunge as deeply as I could into the life of the people. This was not so easily done as said. The language seems at first a nearly insurmountable barrier.

Even now I have pleasure in recalling how that Chinese language first impinged on my auditory nerves. Should I ever be able to learn it? I feared not. In the first place it is sung and every one knows how difficult it is to distinguish words that are sung. I listened to the coolies bawling in the streets. I walked into the Chinese quarter where the merchants, in long blue cotton coats with their pigtails

hanging to their heels, chanted their monotonous rigmarole. Little groups of men would cluster about them and stand listening with a sort of stupid stare on their yellow upturned faces, finally to shuffle along to the next stall where perhaps a more brilliant lot of articles was on display. By and by, even during the passing of that first day, the language grew on my ears. It sang itself, as it were, into my subconsciousness. I went home that night to sleep, but there was no sleep. The language still was ringing in my ears.

In the Chinese quarter are the great silk shops of the world; places where I first saw Chinese women of the better class, beautifully dressed, and moving about with ceremonious bows like so many people at court. The courtesy of the Chinese is always excessive, and at no time is it more advantageously displayed than when a wealthy patroness emerges from her almost maidenly seclusion to replenish her wardrobe. She is borne down the narrow streets in a richly ornamented chair. The curtains are dropped on all sides. No one may look upon her face while she rides. And even when she descends, a child servant, a little girl and virtually a slave, opens a silk umbrella with dropping sides and holds it over her head while the great lady picks her way with feline

nicety into the shop. Her tiny feet twinkle, in their satin-shod simplicity. Her beautiful skirt parts below her hips, showing intermittently the even daintier garments underneath. Only the flesh of her hands is visible, and even her hands shrink into the ample sleeves as if they would hide themselves from the stare of the vulgar mob.

But once inside all is changed. The parasol is shut with a rustle of shimmering silk, and the great lady exposes her peachbloom complexion with frequent glances to see that her attendants are always near. She hangs her head modestly. Her black almond eyes turn their rich glow, vibrant with a consciousness of her beauty and charm, on her hands. The merchant addresses her with bowed head. He would not presume to gaze on her with desire, for how else could he gaze on a creature so charmingly rare? Eye evades eye and only when she finds the stuff that she has dreamed of during the vigils of her sleepless nights when she thought how best to captivate her lord anew, does she permit a smile to soften the arrested color of her features. She smiles and the merchant smiles, though still with bended head. Once again the little slave girl trots obediently before and the great lady, watching the little one's feet, follows in their path to be

ensconced once more in the privacy of her palanquin and borne away to her home in the residential part of the city.

It all was beautiful beyond description, and I was impatient of the day when I should know such an one as she, perhaps meet her in her home and linger with her in her gardens. But first I should have to learn the language of her lord. With him a look was not sufficient. It would be commonplaces, commonplaces, commonplaces. And then when the spoken word began to flow, when the nice phrase came at will, and I could sing my thoughts, then, thought I, I shall truly enter into a princely heritage. And the day did come, and I entered into my heritage.

The streets were ablaze with signs of every conceivable color and length. I walked constantly under them, as if under waving banners. The way was narrow and not straight, which was an added source of pleasure, for one never knows what is coming next. At one of the gates, on the tops of carved and painted posts were two heads that struck me as being remarkably human. Not human-like, understand, but actually the heads of men. And so they were. They had been put there the day before as an example to the populace, and the populace looked once and did not look again.

What were two lives in four hundred millions? The 'rickshaw coolie looked and chuckled. There would be more work for him. There were four less arms and legs to drag others through the streets.

A huge Sikh policeman came down the middle of the thoroughfare, dragging three men behind him. The sight was indeed comical. For instead of grasping them by their arms, he had merely taken a twist on their queues and so held them in an excruciating bondage. They trotted meekly along, anxious to keep their pigtails slack, their backs bent nearly double like men about to commit a stealthy crime. I was the only one who noticed them. Poor men! Were there going to be three heads on the morrow?

When I got back to the Palace Hotel I learned with delight that I had been ordered to Moukden to study the customs and the language. The picture of the beautiful lady danced before my eager eyes. I should have to leave Shanghai, but then Shanghai was altogether too foreign. The Chinese are a most adaptable people. They have to be to survive. I wanted old China with all its oriental glamor. I got it, a part of it, in Moukden.

CHAPTER II

It was one of the anomalies of travel that I should cover the nearly two miles from the Yamato Hotel, which is a hotbed of Japanese imperialism, to the north gate of Moukden city in what once had been New York City horse cars. Now they were pony cars, and one felt all the thrill of a chariot race when riding in them. But before I came to the pony cars I came to the Yamato Hotel, a place which I was to know intimately by and by. For it became my custom to ride my pony down on Thursday nights and meet the trans-Siberian express. Every sort of political refugee congregated in the Yamato Hotel. And not all of them were of the masculine type. Not infrequently a gracious lady alighted from the train and, if one were sufficiently circumspect, one might interview her in the upper drawing-room and exchange cards with her and badinage in pretty French which meant nothing but conveyed a great deal.

I descended into Moukden on what would have been a tempestuous winter's night in any

other country in the world. But in Manchuria the ground was snowless, and the deep vault of the heavens shone like an inverted porcelain bowl of exquisite blue. The blue was punctuated here and there by separate points of light which did not burn like the Pleiades in a warmer clime but shone with a sort of rigid warmth, like the smile of a beautiful but haughty woman. The engine panted as if for breath, and from far away came the singing of the telegraph wires as they stretched glitteringly in the starlight like cobwebs spun from silver.

There was merrymaking in the hotel. But it was an international merrymaking. I saw huge Russians who by their dress exemplified the opening sentence of one of Kipling's powerful tales: "Let it be clearly understood that the Russian is a delightful person till he tucks his shirt in."

Some of them had their shirts tucked in and others were more picturesquely costumed. There was one enormous fellow for whom I conceived a nearly frantic admiration, the sort that a very small boy lavishes on the most noble man in the world. If he wasn't a spy, he had verily missed his calling. I am sure he was also once a duke, or a general, or something equally exalted. I learned later that he

was the confidential secretary of the consul. I knew there would be something secret about him.

But the most magnificent part of him was his whiskers. I often remarked in conversation that he would have been worth his weight in Chinese silver, which is a very indeterminate stuff, in Hollywood. And I often entertained the idea of nominating myself a manager of one and transporting him to the center of movie-land. His manners were exquisite, and he could convey more impressions without saying a word than any person I have yet encountered. As a banker he would have been superb. As a titled personage none could have surpassed him. It was not until I had been some months resident that I learned that he was not so thoroughly Russian as I had first supposed. Kamaroff didn't even wear a shirt. His whiskers served instead, and true to Kipling's phrase, he tucked them in.

Truly it was a motley crowd, and I don't know how many of my colleagues passed me by before one of them, noticing my signature on the register, approached and inquired with continental courtesy if I might happen to be that person. I lingered a while in the Yamato Hotel before striking off for the city, the heart of which was some three miles distant. My

A LAMA TEMPLE

health was drunk so many times that night that Serruys, my Belgian colleague, was the only one fit to see me home. He was a tall splendid-looking boy who might have passed for his king. We bundled into our great coats and went into the night, seeking the pony cars, for they were quicker than 'riekshaws, and besides, one could derive no little heat from the steaming bodies of the natives, though I later learned to prefer the biting cold and the still fresh air.

The Manchurian ponies are rugged little beasts standing some thirteen hands, and in the winter their coats are long and mangy like a bear's. They stood, the pair of them, leaning against each other to preserve the heat of their bodies. I saw the breath steaming from their nostrils as if they had been demons instead of poor, dumb little brutes, who nevertheless were as savage as their once wild prototypes. We clambered into the car, and when it was full, in the rush-hour sense of the word, the driver jangled his bell and lashed the little beasts into a frenzy of frantic speed. When the car had gathered its completest momentum I imagine we were traveling some twenty miles an hour, for in this direction there was a slight down grade and the ponies knew they were going home. The windows steamed and it

was impossible to see into the night. I was stiff from my cramped position and the cold when finally we came to a grinding stop and alighted before the gates of Moukden city.

Even at this late hour (it was near eleven o'clock, I should judge) a number of people were about. Hawkers were crying and bawling on all sides. Venders of food, carrying their stoves on their backs, clustered about the car, eager to dispense a sizable meal for a couple of coppers. Great shaggy dogs rose out of the uneven places of the street to growl and slink into the farther shadows. A child's wail coming from some distant hut, perhaps a half a mile distant, insinuated itself, as it were, into my consciousness. And before me the great city wall rose up, and for the moment it struck me that I was going into exile or into a sort of prison. For I and my colleague were the only whites about and consequently we flared, at least in our own opinions, against the pagan landscape.

While the ponies were yet panting from their run through the winter's night we were safely ensconced in 'rickshaws, and in another instant had passed underneath the great north gate. A Chinese city is builded after the manner of their written character for a well.

There is a big north gate as well as a little north gate, and so on. The big north gate runs through to meet the big south gate, so that if it were not for the various towers rising out of the middle of the city one could have an unobstructed view from one wall to the other. We wound in and out of numerous side streets and alleys. 'Rickshaw men do not believe that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. They prefer to wind about. They abhor long vistas. In their opinion it takes too long to come to the end of them.

Inside the walls the city lay asleep. Occasionally a soldier rose out of the sheltering shadow of a dwelling and challenged us. The governor himself had once been a robber baron. He knew their ways and after dark it was worth a native's life to be abroad. But our answer, or rather my colleague's, that we were students of the Customs College, invariably let us by. At the great south gate, however, we were not so fortunate. Serruys had forgotten the monthly pass issued by Chang Tso-lin. So there was need for bickering of an extended nature. I shall never forget how Serruys talked to the officer who insisted that we should not go out of the city. I later learned that the bulk of the talk was swearing.

I was relieved to learn this, for it distinctly sounded that way.

Finally we got through and came into the great south quarter of the suburbs. This was to be my home for many, many months, while I wrestled with the quite unparalleled idiosyncrasies of the spoken and written tongues. The city outside the gates is not unlike the city inside, except perhaps that it is more ragged and topsy-turvy and smelly. There was no one about in these outskirts. It was like another Pompeii, except that on the morrow it would be resurrected and life begun anew. The streets were excessively narrow. In places I could have reached out my hand and touched the walls of the houses with my fingers. For in China every house has its encircling wall and the streets are like so many passageways, the only opening off them being other streets or doors into solid masonry.

The routine of life goes on in China about the same as anywhere in the world. But there is a great deal that is not routine, that is in the highest degree spectacular, and though I was not forever falling into a sort of tempestuous fairyland, there were times, and a sufficiency of them, when life was surfeited with excitement. My home was an old palace of one of the native princes. Here I resided with

my seven colleagues, all European, and all, like myself, being initiated into the language. We were fortunate in being so well appointed, for the governor considered it his duty to make us his guests from time to time. In this way we were introduced to the intimate workings of the political régime.

I was barely settled before the tenth of October came around and with it the celebration of the birth of the greatest republic on earth. The governor, Chang Tso-lin, had conceived the idea of making a fairly festive occasion of this day. And the fates connived at his scheme. The city was a riot of color and pageantry. The gay uniforms of the soldiers contrasted sharply with the blue of the citizens, not to mention the gorgeous silks of the gentler sex and the quite heterogeneous costumes of the children.

Every imaginable hue was in evidence. One lady was wearing a handsome sea-green coat and shoes of a like brilliancy. Her hair was done in the fantastic Manchu style with little peaks and gables and whirligigs. On further glance I saw that she was exceedingly beautiful, and that she was the center of an admiring throng who now advanced and now receded, depending on her propinquity. She was tall and stately and very unlike the women of the

south. I could only imagine the ripened curves of her form from the suppleness of her movements. She moved slowly, yet with an exquisite grace. Breadth of stride was suggested rather than openly practiced. It was as if she felt the consciousness of her womanly charm and yet disdained to show it in the open street.

Her complexion was flawless, like the complexions of Manchu children. Her cheeks were firm though exquisitely molded over the bones which were high and pronounced, showing her Tartar ancestry. She was so different from the little lady of Shanghai! But at the same time I could detect the same matchless modesty, the identical glow of the blue-black eyes which shone with a kind of restrained coquetry.

It struck me that her life was being held in abeyance, but would she have been so beautiful if this were true? I think not. No wonder that the men who ruled the Middle Kingdom invented concubinage, which is only another name for the love that often did not come with marriage. In China matches are by no means made in heaven. Can any man fall in love with any woman? An old sage asked that question, and though he did not dare put his answer in writing, he was known to have moved his head crosswisely. In this way he gave a silent sanction to love.

CAMEL'S BACK BRIDGE

WALLED-IN HOMES AND STREET

In Peking, not so far from the Western Hills, where the emperors used to play in the summer time, there is a camel's-back bridge. Beneath are the iridescent lotus. And far beneath the lotus leaves, down deep where the light of the sun is unknown, reside the souls of princesses who found not love but death. For here they came in the stillness of the night when the Tartar moon made shadows on the water, and here they wept and donned white silks and let themselves fall gently beneath the shimmering surface.

The crowd surged and I felt myself being borne irresistibly along. There was a blare of trumpets and people scattered out of the thoroughfare like autumn leaves caught up by a wintry wind. They seemed to swirl themselves hither and thither as the mounted soldiers came riding furiously by. These were only a prelude to the procession. By and by, down near the great drum tower, I could distinguish a cluster of floating banners, and within the banners I could visualize the little man whose name once had been a household terror throughout the countryside. It was like the old story of taking the bad boy of the gang and making him leader to cure him. Chang Tso-lin did not plunder openly any more, but what need has a king for plunder?

It should be easy to be happy if you are rich; though wise men have quoted differently.

Though I had seen pictures of the former robber chief and had him described to me, this was to be my first glimpse of him in the flesh. He was riding a cream-colored pony whose tail barely swept the ground, and one could tell at a glance that the little governor was a superb horseman. He looked neither to the right nor to the left. He merely sat like a statue while the pacing pony bore him statelily by. The crowd upturned their faces. There was admiration and fear depicted in every countenance. What would I not have given to have seen the lady in green just then! Did she apply for one of his glances, or was she content with the lord that fate had assigned her? But the governor rode impassively on. His face was set with a thoughtful sobriety, though there was humor in his eyes, the sort of humor that deals death while it smiles.

He had just gotten a hundred feet below me when there came a blinding flash, succeeded by a roar out of a doorway on the other side of the street. Immediately the crowd became a mob. There was a wild scramble, an outburst of cries, the shrieks of women mingling with the howlings of dogs and the execrations of men. And through it all the mounted

soldiers rode like mad. An attempt had been made on the life of Chang Tso-lin. Some one, perhaps the father or brother of one whose head had been lopped off outside the city walls, was seeking the great revenge. But the little governor bore a charmed life. There was a hurtling of limbs, human ones, and burnt clothing through the air, and a cloud of thick gray smoke that seemed to fall upwards, so slowly, ponderously did it move. Then all was silent again.

Being a foreigner, I could get near to the scene of disaster, for there had been disaster, even though the little man on the cream-colored pony had flitted away like a dissolving cloud. The poor wretch who would have hurled the bomb had not calculated on the height of the door lintel over his head. He had raised the instrument of death in both hands, thinking to hurl it far across the street. But the metal sphere had collided with the top of the door frame, and the bomb, rebounding into the dwelling, had exploded with terrific force.

Eighteen persons, or rather the remnants of them, were identified before sundown. It was a ghastly affair, and only a single evidence of the slumbering antipathy of the mass for its rulers, an antipathy that seldom comes to

aught, but when it does is so horrible, so fiendish—as only Orientals can be fiendish—that it strikes terror not only into the hearts of those against whom malice is directed but even into the hearts of the criminals themselves.

Chang Tso-lin had escaped to the Japanese consulate. Once more his dexterous horsemanship had saved him, and on the morrow the incident was forgotten. For life is stern in these Eastern lands. Action crowds action with surprising frequency. And though there is the old eternal repetition of eating and drinking and sleeping, there is also that which stirs even the breasts of the old and causes the mothers to cuddle their infants frantically to their bosoms. There is also that which makes the blood of the strongest warrior pale with fear.

We got to talking about Chang Tso-lin that evening, and from talking about the little governor we naturally drifted on to robbers. Manchuria is infested with red-bearded fellows, as the natives colorfully term them. My old teacher cautioned me not to go too far from the city. "They might capture you," he said. And then I reflected that there might be no little wisdom in his words, for a foreigner should be particularly precious in their sight.

They could demand a handsome ransom for a foreigner. When I asked my old teacher more about the matter, he confided to me, not without a serious light in his eyes, that there was a notion common among the country folk that if a man could make his executioner laugh the sword would fall harmless by his side. On hearing this I at once implored the old gentleman to tell me a number of anecdotes that might possibly make an executioner laugh. I wanted to put into practice that new adage of safety first. But the old teacher waved his yellow hand in front of his yellower face as much as to say, "You can't depend on hearsay, you know." He believed in myths but like a practical Son of Han he would not risk his life for them.

Most of the robbers are ex-soldiers who have not been paid, and, having guns, they set out to be their own paymasters. It must be a lucrative business, and it is much safer than going a-begging. For in the case of going a-begging you are at the mercy of your constituents, whereas in the other you hold the upper hand. It is a criminal offence for a citizen to have a firearm, so plundering defenceless villages does not call for excessive courage. Where courage is lacking there is usually an inordinate amount of cruelty, and

the farmers suffer untold woes at the hands of these ruffians. But the little governor lops off their heads as fast as they are captured. It will be a sorry day for him if ever the tables are turned.

CHAPTER III

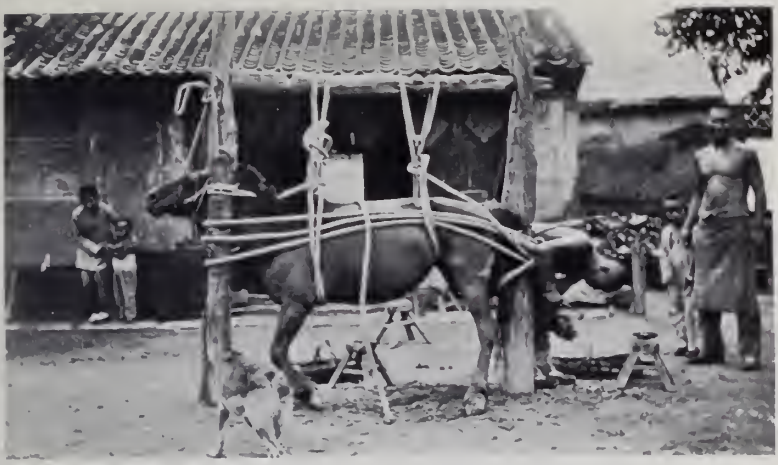
The upshot of our conversation about the robbers was that I should meet Ferdinand Berteaux, French Consul at Moukden, who, Serruys confided to me one day, had a Belgian army pistol for sale. It turned out to be a lovely weapon of blue steel and I got it for about one-third its value. In this manner I came to know Ferdinand Berteaux, Chinese savant and art connoisseur, just such another person as Henri Allegre whom Conrad portrays so picturesquely in "The Arrow of Gold." He knew the Chinese thoroughly, one felt. Added to a naturally penetrative mind was that delightful French characteristic of emotional aloofness. I questioned Ferdinand Berteaux as to all sorts of things. And always I got an illuminating answer, cool, incisive, and sometimes nearly cruel. He had been leading the solitary life for eight years. Things were no longer what they seemed, but what they were.

Nearly every week, on Saturday nights, he invited Serruys and me to a famous Chinese

restaurant. It was our custom to go early and leave early. The consul had arranged his life with fastidious care. Usually he arrived just a little after us, the pockets of his greatcoat bulging with wines—red, white—and always the most delectable champagne, which he did not taste himself but forced unsparingly on us and on any of the Chinese attendants whom he could induce to drink.

The dinners were sumptuous affairs. Ordinarily we ordered a Peking duck. We always ordered the duck first, because it is good Chinese custom to permit the patron a view of the bird while it lives. The native, who took great pride in serving us from week to week, was wont to drive in a big fellow for our special delectation. He made the poor duck do his paces like a race horse. He pinched him to make him quack, and he flopped him on his back to show us with what celerity the big fellow could right himself. It was always the same. Week after week this duck would entertain us and week after week we would send him away and call for a less athletic, more ponderous, fatty fellow. I believe now that this big duck was a trained bird. No doubt he still is amusing foreign patrons.

Once the duck was ordered, the consul



A CITY BLACKSMITH

A STREET BARBER

would turn to me and ask what my fancy preferred. I had conceived quite a taste for sharks' fins, so invariably I called for them. Now let it be known from the outset that sharks' fins are a delicacy in the strictest sense of the word. When cooked they form a sort of gelatinous stringy mass, but quite without the prevailing quality of strings. They dissolve readily on the tongue, do not lodge in the throat, and yet can be chewed, if one feels so inclined. The soup from them is really delicious, not oily like that made from chicken, but somehow clean and smooth, like warm wine.

In addition to the aforementioned delicacy, we had bamboo shoots, birds' nests, pickled onions, what, for want of a nicer term, I shall call deteriorating eggs (for these last one has to acquire a taste), a delicious bacon sweetened in syrup, and a veritable host of smaller dishes. Tea, of course, was brought in first. And then followed watermelon seeds. I can fancy if watermelon seeds were *hors d'œuvre* that one would have to eat a bushel of them to whet the palate. I used to sit with quite childish admiration in the private restaurants watching the geisha girls manipulate these seeds. It would seem that they were able to keep a constant stream of them passing into

their mouths. They served a purpose, however. Whenever conversation lagged one could always busy oneself with a seed. I found that under propitious circumstances I could eat about three an hour. Husking a dried watermelon seed with the teeth is an art beside which the use of chopsticks is mere child's play.

I had been only a little while in Moukden before I began to hear strange things, among which the destruction of girl babies figured prominently. Ferdinand Berteaux should know. So I asked him. "Was it really true?" I asked. I shall never forget how he looked at me with his cold sparkling eyes. Was he laughing at my credulity? No. For he bowed his head with a certain awful finality, as if I *had* found him out in a practice of which he would rather have me ignorant. Even then I could not believe what he later had to say. But his philosophy was overpowering. In the end he gained my consent.

"You see," he said, "there is no alternative in a civilization such as this. It is man made, and it has gone man mad. A father finds that he has brought more mouths into the world than he has food to feed. What can he do but destroy? And having determined on destruction, whom shall he kill? Obviously what he conceives to be the passive principle in life,

the negative rather than the positive. And this he takes to be woman, merely because she is passive, as all the world knows; passive so long as her mate pursues her, but becoming pursuer the moment he slackens his attention. And so the little girls have had to go. It is unfortunate, but it is inevitable. Of prevention they have no knowledge. All their remedies are curative. After all, is the seed more precious than the fruit, in the Deity's eyes, I mean?" Thus spake Ferdinand Berteaux.

Still it seemed utterly without the bounds of imagination. So the consul invited me to stay at his home for an evening. The consulate was within sight of the Temple of Fertility. Here unfortunate mothers might bring unfortunate children, deposit them, and slink away in the darkness. Hardly were they gone before gaunt forms rose up from the dark places of the streets. The dogs were ravenous as wolves. They were wont to feed on their own kind. Why should they hesitate to feed on human flesh?

It chanced to be a beautiful night. The consulate was on the outskirts of the eastern part of the city. Just beyond stretched the open country. The Manchurian moon stood high in the cobalt heavens. The brown expanse of the farmlands was dotted with

graves, multitudinous conical mounds heaped with red earth that glittered strangely in the moonlight. The city was apparently asleep. After a time (we were sitting in the consul's luxuriant garden) the mystery of the night commenced to work its will. I felt tired and heavy, like one who is surfeited with rich foods. The consul told me to go and lie down a while. He had writing to do. He would call me when I should come. A servant was posted, watching the Temple of Fertility.

The magic of the Oriental night was still in the air when dawn streaked the vaulted blue with her roseate finger. The consul had aroused me. We went through the gardens, following in the tread of a servant who was clothing himself as he walked. When we reached a corner of the garden the native separated the hedge with his fingers and pointed silently at a figure crouching before the little shrine. It was difficult to make out the sex of this person. But from the manner in which the white-swathed bundle lay in arms, we guessed that it was a woman.

She deposited the bundle lightly on the cold stone and hastened away. All was as silent as death for a moment, or perhaps it was much more than a moment. Then a little wail broke on our ears, low and pene-

trating like the gurgle of falling water. A gaunt shadow rose up from the opposite wall and slunk templewards, seeking with terrible certainty its human prey.

Perhaps Ferdinand Berteaux anticipated some desperate action on my part, for I felt his long flexible fingers tighten on my arm. But this did not prevent me from drawing my blue steel pistol from my pocket and taking a cool deliberate aim at the shadow now almost directly opposite. The consul had no intimation of this. The pistol cracked pleasantly on the still night air; the shadow reared itself with a barely audible whine of pain and fell limply down. In another moment I had gone over the hedge and was stooping near the little bundle in white. We must have made a remarkable group: the shrine, myself, and the child. I could see nothing distinctly. I only felt warmth and movement against my hands.

The consul chuckled a sort of desperate chuckle when I lifted the bundle towards him over the hedge. "*Le prenez!*" he said to his native. And when I felt the barely perceptible weight gone from me I snaked myself into the garden. I was flushed with the exultation of victory, though I almost immediately hung my head as if ashamed for what I had done.

"It will cost you twenty-five dollars," the consul said with a mock seriousness.

"Twenty-five dollars?" I echoed, with all the breath I then had at my command.

"The mission will take it for that amount, and keep it and clothe it and feed it, and finally turn it into the world again to be married and beaten."

I could say nothing, so the consul went on.

"Yes, for a time, even the mission folk stationed a man near here to do as you have done. But money is not illimitable nor is the capacity of houses. I, who do not believe in such things, am already supporting ten. But you will not do it again. You will learn to avoid such sights. In China sights act like fits of anger. They ruin one's temperament."

What the consul said was only too true. But I deposited my little girl, who, by the way, was blind (an essential cause of her abandonment), with the good mission folk who perhaps may find a better use for her than turning her back to her own.

And from that day on I did avoid sights, though in China one cannot help seeing things. But though I was later to see men chivied by tigers, I don't think anything quite affected me the way the sight at the Temple of Fertility did. It was experience, and it brought

to my mind an all too sober truth. On the other hand, it was not altogether unreasonable. Necessity is often a cruel teacher, and nowhere more uncompromising than in the Middle Kingdom, where life is cheap, and where a man has not earned a right to it until he is ready to lay it down.

I must thank Ferdinand Berteaux for many things, unpurchasable gifts, as it were. But I must thank him particularly for introducing me to the niceties of food. Because I acquired a taste for edible extravaganzas I made progress with the language. And because I made progress with the language I became intimate with the people. And what connection, pray, has eating with talking? The answer is universally applicable. Both practices loosen the tongue.

But it was not in restaurants of the more obvious type that I passed my leisure evening hours. Our commissioner had already told us that women speak more intelligibly than men. If you would talk accurately, he said, seek the women and little children. The children were seldom unafraid. So I, generally in company with Serruys, sought the singing girls.

The Geisha Girl, as she is prettily termed in Japan, is a much misunderstood little woman.

Her art is solely that of dispensing light entertainment. Her soul remains always untouched. It is as if she revolved about herself, permitting the eyes of men only a fleeting glance of her clean heart. I have yet to see any one except a drunken foreigner insult one of these butterflies of the East; and on this occasion the little thing turned to him and said through her frightened, trembling lips, "You must not drink any more, master. You are not yourself when you drink." It was a subtle compliment to the essential divinity in man, and in this case the divine in the man responded and, as it were, electrified him into sobriety.

My home was unique, but I was there, and it is often most difficult to keep good company with ourselves. The singing girls afforded an avenue of escape, and I cannot refrain from mentioning that we brought much pleasure into their lives. Besides, the atmosphere in which they lived was thoroughly Oriental. As a foreigner I did not have access to the homes of the Chinese except in my official capacity as a visitor representing the great republic. Then, too, the charm of the Orient has always been more or less of an underground affair. Only the color and strangeness of it are patent to the view. But the throbbing

romance of life is buried away from the prying eyes of the casual looker-on. One soon tires of sights. It is the human heart that perennially interests, and underneath a seething sea of commonplace actions and faces shimmer the subtler issues of life.

As elsewhere intimated, a certain wise sage secretly gave his sanction to love. In all respects but this, the Chinese order their days with naturalness. Happy that man, runs another proverb, who falls in love with his wife. And this is the truly unfortunate part of it, that a man and a woman may be condemned to everlasting companionship without a spark of affection subsisting between them. It is no wonder that the Tartar princesses, beautiful proud creatures whose blood throbbed for their ideal mates, preferred the closing rush of cold waters to an existence unutterably dull.

And so there is an undercurrent of romance that sweeps one on irresistibly, once one has felt its kiss. Husbands seek love without the marital bond. And many a little girl whose coming into the world was frowned upon has lived to shake an emperor's throne because she was beautiful and gracious in his sight. I have not seen romance on the surface but I have seen it and felt it in the world of night,

which, in China, is not black with the wickedness of vice, but colorful and quick with the old eternal value of the stars.

I shall long remember Mignonette who was first pointed out to me in the gardens surrounding the old imperial palace. I had gone there from a high sense of duty, for to have resided in Moukden and not to have seen the ancient home of the Manchu kings was indeed to have fallen into historical decrepitude. The palace was only a shade less beautiful than the palaces of the Tartars in Peking. There were the customary great stone courts, flanked with representations of an imaginary animal kingdom but with none of the real. The expansive yellow roofs swept with low wide lines so that I fancied I could touch the eaves of them until I got quite near, when they curved audaciously upwards, curling just out of reach. At the very top, on either end, a dragon reared its sinuous head, and eight little dogs were pictured as barking farther down. From these the evil spirits kept a respectful distance. The wooden columns supporting the roof were variously painted. Each color taken alone seemed too brilliant for sight. But together they blended with such harmonious confusion that the result was a kind of sensual pleasure, so that I lingered

TEMPLED ROOFS

by them, wondering why my soul seemed risen to my eyes.

Inside, the palaces were already musty with age. It was an experience of the unique to put my hand on the emperor's throne and visualize the terrible monarch sitting there. I say terrible because it would be his chiefest delight to strike terror into the hearts of his people. The people were afraid of nothing but devils and their emperor. Both of these agencies had the power of death in their hands; the one slow and uncertain, the other quick and sure. Wherefore the emperor was more to be feared than the devil. And in this thought he received his chiefest compensation for the monotonies of the throne.

But what had Mignonette to do with all this? The venerable gatekeeper confided to me that she lingered in the gardens habitually, and that rumor had it that she was descended from a long line of imperial favorites. Some one mentioned the fact to her one day, and ever since she has looked on the gardens as peculiarly her own. She was standing near a potted diminutive pine when first I saw her. And the truth of the matter is I perceived her image in the pool at whose brink she paused before I caught a glimpse of her own charming self. The diminutive pine was set on the

edge of the pool. Just beneath the surface gold and silver carp swam lazily to and fro. Of course I had seen the back of her when the gatekeeper originally told me who she was. But at her face I could only guess and my guessing fell short of the truth.

I saw the various colors of her cloak reflected in the nearly opaque water. She was costumed in a cherry-blossom pink; the whole effect of her dress was to enhance the delicate glow on her cheeks, as if her garments were in reality white but had caught up their hue from her skin, as distant clouds are tinted by ones of deeper hue. She must have been aware of my presence earlier than I thought, for it struck me that she smiled through the medium of the water. But when I smiled in return, if it were in return, she became instantly serious, seeming solicitous for the fish whom she fed out of a little silk bag dangling from her arm.

I walked quite near her; she drew back from the edge of the pool to let me pass. But I signified by a sweep of my arm that I had no desire to pass. Whereat she smiled prettily, made the barest shadow of a curtsy, and went on feeding the gold and silver carp.

I asked her if I too might feed the carp. I had to repeat this question before a complete

sense of it broke upon her. She had not imagined a man being so trivially employed. But when I insisted, she held out her arm, inviting me by this action to help myself, as it were. This was the prelude to a delightful acquaintance. Her modesty, for she was essentially modest, did not obtrude on me like that of the Chinese women I met formally. I suppose her vocation as singing girl had given her a certain familiarity with men, but it was in no wise vulgar. Then, too, it was my acquaintance with Mignonette that prepared me for an acquaintance with a Tartar princess. But I liked Mignonette for her piquant Oriental ways. With the waving of a wand she might have been a princess. It certainly was her nature.

I doubt if anything could be more romantic than to sit, sometimes recline as the old Romans did, near a little red lacquer tray garnished with every imaginable delicacy, listening to this almond-eyed beauty chant the folklore of her people. It was like a repetition of the Arabian Nights.

The room where I dined to the music of her liquid talk was little and oblong. The floor was carpeted with a gray camel's-hair creation in the center of which a blue dragon lay like one drugged to rest in billowy down. The

furniture was of teak, and the little dais, or k'ang, which occupied the farther end of the room somewhat after the manner of a throne, was tastefully decorated with a copper brazier burning a most delectable incense, and two perfect examples of large cloisonné. On either side of the brazier was stretched a finely woven straw matting with a cylinder-like pillow of red at the top. A low pearl inlaid table supported the brazier and it was upon a portion of this table that my food invariably was set.

Mignonette arranged herself on the other side, and between plying my chopsticks, I gazed at her through the blue smoke of the incense. I could easily imagine her to be some fairy spirit risen out of the brazier. She must have perceived my inclination for sentiments of this sort. For she uttered a little laugh, crisp and metallic, whenever I got in this mood, and always it recalled me to myself and her.

She wore her hair parted cleanly in the middle with the long black plaits coiled in plaques over her ears. There was not the slightest suggestion of ornamentation about her, except for a pair of heavy bracelets of beaten gold which were fastened about her wrists by the softness of the metal. Though

I must have dined with Mignonette a dozen, perhaps even twenty times, I do not recall seeing her twice garmented the same. She had an air of infinite variety, and even the identical songs seemed different on successive evenings. I had favorite ones and we were constantly disputing whether she had sung the piece requested. And invariably she repeated it slowly, like a nun telling her beads.

At the end she would say, "Now do you believe me or not?"

Selecting an especially choice morsel for her lips, I would answer, "I believe."

CHAPTER IV

Why will people persist in paying tribute to names? Do the Chinese go to church on Sunday, one asks? I can only answer that in China Sunday has no concern with the practices of the Christian religion. Li-pai, the initial day of the week, signifies to pay a call, and on this day those who are so fortunate as not to have to toil clothe themselves in their most magnificent raiment and repair to the houses of their friends. Of course, somebody stays at home. But the matter works out logically enough, when one considers that the lesser always go to the great,—another instance of Mahomet seeking the mountain.

But there are holidays in which everybody joins, when even the beggars make a pretense of idling, and the very dogs desist from their scavengerlike activities. The New Year's festival continues for about three weeks, and during this period every community, be it great or small, blooms like an American beauty rose. Red has always been a violent color and indicative of life. And so I suppose it is not illogical

that the Chinese have chosen it to represent an epitome of their feelings.

The doors are literally covered with strips of scarlet paper on which various homely proverbs are written. Some of these propitiate the devil, or more properly devils, while others simply ask that fortune may follow those who dwell within. I have never observed people reading these sentiments and I imagine this is because they are universally known, and through constant usage have fallen into a kind of moral desuetude. But they do serve one purpose, however; and this is to brighten the otherwise dull brown and gray of the walls and buildings. In China, during New Year's, one cannot help seeing red, and occasionally yellow, which is the color of the dragon and really more pleasing to the eye.

That first New Year's festival in Moukden will always be memorable for me because I passed the greater part of it in the open country. One of my colleagues, a Japanese who had already been in residence a year and was pretty much of a pilgrim, suggested that we spend two or three days at T'ang Kang Tzu, a famous bathing hostelry in southern Manchuria. T'ang Kang Tzu is situated in the district made famous by a number of skirmishes preliminary to the Battle of Moukden.

But even had there been no hastily thrown-up trenches and scarred rocks and cannon-ball pierced temples, the traveler would still have wended his way to the sulphur springs. It was a rare sight with the thermometer below zero to watch the little boiling lake that surrounded the inn with an odoriferous mist, while the smell of warm steam formed a sharp contrast to the penetrating cold of the winter air.

We were surprised to learn that the inn was in character more Japanese than Chinese, but this in no way detracted from our subsequent pleasure. No sooner had I been assigned my room than I quite naturally conceived the idea of taking a sulphur bath. To this end I clapped my hands as loudly as I could and was almost instantly gratified to see the little sliding door move noiselessly back and a Japanese girl step out of her clogs and into my chamber. She gave me only a fleeting inconsequential glance and busied herself with the embers of a tiny charcoal brazier, the sole source of heat for the entire room. She squatted over it, warming her hands, and occasionally stirring it up. I watched her features intently, wondering whether she had come in answer to the clap of my hands or of her own accord. Finally she did look up at me, and, noticing that I had in no wise altered

TERRACED HILLS NEAR T'ANG KANG TZU

FARMER WITH ODD PLOW-MATES

since her entry into the chamber, she suggested, with rather a complicated motion of her hands, that I make ready for the bath.

I was so pleased we had at last come to an understanding of some sort that I jauntily removed my coat. My shoes were in the corridor so I could not commence with them. My coat I rustled as loudly as I could, but the maiden gave it not the slightest heed. Then I removed my waistcoat and collar and tie, but similarly to no avail. Still she squatted before the charcoal brazier. Perhaps she is waiting until the fire gets thoroughly going, I thought. I will wait a moment. She may be lost in meditation. But the only effect of my arrested movements was to cause her to rustle her hand in one of the flowing sleeves of her kimono and bring forth a kind of calico robe which she placed on the straw matting about midway between us. Noticing that I made no move to take it up, she looked at me quickly and seemed surprised to learn that I still was conventionally attired. But she passed no remark, at least no intelligible one, and recommenced warming her chubby hands.

Good heavens, I thought, has the girl no modesty? One of my colleagues went clacking by my door and hallooed me to hurry along, as there was to be a *sachimi* feast directly after

the bathing. He had never been in a sulphur bath before and was eager to join the others. I likewise was eager, but there were certain impediments to my haste. I could not help wondering if my colleagues had suffered like obstacles. Perhaps theirs were uglier than mine and older too. But this, this mere slip of a girl, certainly did not know what she was about. I looked her squarely in the eyes. No, she was mentally alert. There was about her nothing pertaining to the idiot. She seemed possessed of all her faculties. In this respect she was to be entitled to far more consideration than I. For I doubt if I were possessed of a half of them.

The end of it was that I discreetly slipped into my calico robe. Whereat she rose to her feet, slid back the little paper door, and bade me follow her. There had not been a suggestion of indecency about the matter. And why, I have often since asked myself, should there have been? She had come to conduct me to my bath, and instead of waiting in the cold corridor she had squatted beside my fire. I would have been a wretch to turn her out and she would not have understood such a summary action.

What an admirable race these Japanese are! Only a little way back they were savages.

To-day they are civilized. And the fine part of it is that they have retained the best qualities of the savage. Nothing physical startles them. They are the only race making a pretense to civilization who has not mixed its drinks. This is one of the sources of their strength. Poor, nearly effete, supercivilized China has wandered away from nature, and nature has exacted a heavy penalty from her But this little girl was as natural as a flower, and not, therefore, less charming.

The bath was a large Roman affair with a series of steps leading down to the water, and a number of stone pedestals with straw cushions on the tops of them served as depositories for our robes. My companions were already as red as salmon. For the sulphur water is merely piped from the lake into the bath and it usually takes the novice, depending on whether he slips or not, from twenty minutes to an hour to become fully immersed. One end of the bath was reserved for women and children. But, as fate ran, we had it all to ourselves, though, on the succeeding days, when Japanese patrons and their families began to arrive from the south, we were a motley crowd, but none the less a decorous one.

That evening, still garbed in our kimonos, and with a variety of pretty serving maids

hovering like so many butterflies over our reclining forms, we ate our *sachimi.* The word in itself means a variety of things to eat. The particular pleasure in eating *sachimi* is derived from the fact of cooking the food for oneself. A little lacquer table, with a small copper stove set in the middle of it, was deposited before each one of us. And then the serving maids brought in a multitude of tiny plates containing all sorts of viands and herbs from thin juicy portions of red beef and carved chicken to the succulent bamboo and tasty eggplant. A bowl with beaten eggs and a frying pan completed the equipment.

The method of cooking was to place the diminutive spider over the equally diminutive stove, introduce some fatty substance to form a grease, and then put in the beef and chicken and bamboo sprouts and everything else in heterogeneous confusion. The result was a highly delectable dish that afforded some three mouthfuls of the backwoods variety. The bowl of beaten raw eggs was used as a kind of sauce into which the morsels were dipped and cooled before committing them to their final oblivion. Once the frying pan was emptied, there was nothing to do but commence all over again, which we did some ten or twelve times, when bowls of rice were

brought in and we took ceremonial leave of our repast.

All this while two children, who gave the appearance of being animated dolls, so highly were they colored and so fantastically dressed, entertained us variously. First they played on a sort of zither and sang, too, with little melodious voices, clear and passionless. Afterwards they went through a kind of pantomimic show which exactly fitted their natures and their costumes. There was something excessively incongruous about the whole affair. I could not help feeling that they might much better have been at home with their mothers or else in school, instead of treading so young the primrose path of glory. But the little women were quite unmindful of their tender years. A sober responsibility shone about their painted features, and when I smiled at them they did not giggle foolishly in return, but simply bowed their heads as artists will who acknowledge merited applause.

T'ang Kang Tzu is some hundred miles to the south of Moukden and I did not realize the differences in temperature until I returned. This winter of the snowless variety has a certain deliberate iciness to it which chills one to the marrow. The brilliancy of the sun is altogether deluding. One fancies one can go

about with impunity, and so one can, if one will. But nature ever exacts her requital, and stinging cheeks and numb ears await him who puts much faith in appearances.

I shall never forget the day of my first appointment with my Japanese dentist. It was eight o'clock of a cold winter's morning that I strode briskly around the city walls. Contrary to custom, there was a light blanket of snow on the ground. Numberless warm winds had swept up from the sea to be met by equally cold ones from Siberia. The result was a light fall of snow, and the city became strangely clean, as if by magic.

Just near the police headquarters, as I was striding by, my attention was claimed by the prostrate figure of a man who lay a little to one side on the farther bank of a ditch. I went near out of a natural curiosity and found that he was alive, though slowly freezing. Of course he was a *ch'iung jen*, a poor man, in reality a beggar in the clutches of a most noxious habit. I called the attention of some soldiers to him. They only laughed and made a motion with their hands as if they were about to inject morphine into the fleshy parts of their arms. "*Ma-fei*," they said. "He eats morphine." But even so, I countered, you can't let the man lie there and freeze to

death. But the soldiers only laughed derisively. Perhaps it was only surprise that I, a foreigner, should have taken an interest, quite unaccountable in their eyes, in such a low being as a beggar. Finally I asked them what would be done with him. One of the soldiers, an officer, replied, "When he is dead the city will bury him." Realizing how powerless I was to effect anything against the traditions of this people, I went my way, though my heart beat high with a not unrighteous indignation.

When a few hours later I returned, the beggar was lying a little farther up, as if he were seeking the shelter of the city walls. But even these had been denied him, for the cold had chilled his heart, and now he lay there, his naked limbs drawn into his hollow chest, waiting for the only service his city ever would do him. An old official told me that a thousand beggars froze in the streets of Moukden during a particularly severe winter. On hearing this I was tempted to hate them all, but on further reflection I could only come to the point at which most of the older foreign residents long since had arrived: namely, that such is life in China, and that to alter it you first must change the course of ancient history.

But if the fate of the beggar was a distasteful affair, that of my cook was eminently

more pleasing. I came home one day to find a substitute in the kitchen. Now in a land where service is cheaper than silver one soon gets accustomed to having things done in a certain manner, the meat at one's table not excepted. So when I noticed that the food was not as it used to be, I demanded an explanation from the chief servant, or boy, as he is more familiarly termed. This particular *kuan-shih-ti*, or housekeeper, spoke very broken English, but he was understandable, so I always conversed with him in my vernacular.

"What this mean?" I asked. "Number one cook go away. Kitchen now belong very much number two. I no savvy this food."

"Cook wife make him present number one girl," my boy replied. "Cook all time say wife no belong home. All time go foreign mistress, sew, clean house, wash babies. Cook wife say must go, plenty money belong foreign mistress side. Cook say wife belong home side. Wife no wanchee stay home side. Cook get angry beat wife. So wife say allight, you wanchee wife, I pay you girl. So wife pay cook number one girl. Cook stay home one two day see girl belong fit, no belong fit."

"You mean to tell me, *kuan-shih-ti*, that my cook's wife bought him a girl?"

"Yes, he wife buy him girl."

BRONZE INCENSE BURNER AT LAMA TEMPLE

"And how much did she pay?"

"Cook no speak price fashion. Number one girl belong twelve fifteen dollars."

"But I should think the cook's wife would belong jealous."

"No belong jealous. Wife he go foreign mistress side, make plenty money. Cook he say wife belong home side. Cook wife no belong fit. What can do? Cook wanchee wife, so wife pay him number one girl. Now all belong fit. Allight."

As my *kuan-shih-ti* persisted in this version of affairs, and as my food persisted in being very much number two, I decided to take matters by the horns the very next day. So in the morning I sought my cook. He lived in a fairly respectable part of the city. His house contained three or four rooms, so I could easily understand why he should insist on having some one to keep them tidy for him.

Let it be understood that to cook for a foreigner is a very great opportunity indeed. "Squeeze," that Chinese custom immemorially old, is practiced with rare diligence by cooks. It is a custom to which every foreign mistress must sooner or later submit. For although she may take her basket on her arm and go forth into the smelly places of the city, she will find, much to her chagrin, that the butcher

has "squeezed" her. Even though the price seems ridiculously low to her foreign way of thinking, she is bound to realize that to the native it is a number of coppers lower. When she returns her cook will ask her, "How much Missy pay this piece?" And then the old cook will smile and say, "Oh, too much, too much." So the Missy finally gives in and the cook pockets a half of the difference.

For this reason my cook lived in style and thought he could afford to inflict on me a substitute. I found him smoking a long pipe just inside the devil screen. The devil screen is a detached piece of masonry, like a wall, in front of the door. Any stray devil will thus be deflected from entering the house, for it is a fact well known to anthropomorphical science that devils always travel in straight lines and parallel to the earth. My cook was sitting on the lea side of the devil screen,—which is quite necessary with a number one girl in the offing.

He must have been disagreeably perturbed to see me, but with true Chinese simplicity he did not manifest the same. He slowly knocked the ash from his pipe, giving at the same time a little guttural cry as if he were clearing his throat. It was what native mothers said to their children when foreigners came by.

Freely translated that cry said, "Make yourself scarce."

"Aren't you well, cook?" I asked.

Perhaps he had not been thinking of feigning until I gave him this lead. If so, I must apologize for doing him a wrong. If I suggested to him that he be false I am heartily sorry for it. He had already risen halfway from his seat with alacrity. I took special note of this, for having eleven servants had made me unduly perspicacious. But the other half of the distance from a sort of incipient recumbency to erectness was covered slowly, and with a suggestion of distress quite overpowering.

"Belong stiff, very stiff," the cook said finally.

"That's too bad, cook," I answered, "for I've come to tell you this number two business is no good. I must let your substitute go. Will you recommend a cook in your place?"

"No belong that fashion quick, master. Leg he soon belong more better. Maybe to morrow I come back."

"No, cook, to-morrow is too far away. How much do I owe you?"

"Allight. Must cook, must cook. Wife he all time go foreign side. Dirt everywhere. What can do?"

"Why don't you hire a girl, cook, to keep your house tidy while your wife's away?"

"*Kuan-shih-ti* talk too much. You know? Allight. Belong Chinese fashion pay girl, suppose wife no stay home. I come now."

Whereat the cook, not one whit chagrined at having made a partial fool of himself, called out for some one to bring him his hat. In another instant a rosy-cheeked Chinese girl, gayly attired, appeared in the doorway. She could not have been above sixteen years of age, though she was quite womanly withal. Had she been married, her hair would have been built up in the customary manner. But as she was still a virgin, she wore it in one thick shiny braid down her back. A little piece of red string had been plaited into the end of the braid, so there could be no doubt of her status, for a piece of red string at the end of a braid denotes the maiden.

At sight of me she paused, for she was as yet unaccustomed to her master, not to mention a foreign stranger, who in the vernacular was racily termed a devil. But the cook did not tolerate maidenly modesty. Perhaps in his eyes it was not among the original virtues. So he cried out the single word, "*Lai–come*," and she came toward us, tripping lightly along with the cook's foolish hat, an old soft one of

mine, in her hand. In another instant we had passed to the street side of the devil screen and left the young lady wonderingly alone.

Perhaps she thought her master wanted to be rid of her, and that I was a prospective customer. I never saw her again, though invariably, whenever I met the cook out of the kitchen, I inquired for his number one girl.

"Still belong fit?" I would ask.

"*Hsing-ah*—can do," he flippantly would reply.

CHAPTER V

The fourth of July broke on me quite unexpectedly one morning. It is strange that I should not have been looking forward to it; strange when one considers that the bulk of the paraphernalia of the noisiest days of our youth came from this fairyland over the sea. But the best firecrackers have always remained in China. Never have I heard such terrific explosions as these veritable small cannon made. Of course the Chinese do not celebrate the glorious fourth. But then the natives are always celebrating. In this instance, however, it was an American colleague who started the affair. And the rest of the Europeans almost immediately joined in, quite to the delight of the venders of small explosives, for we were extremely prodigal of noise.

The best of the lot was a cracker which went off twice, and the beautiful feature of the thing was that you never knew where it would be when it exploded the second time. Throw it where you would, it would jump,

sometimes fifty feet, to the most unlikely places, straight into the air, off to one side, or occasionally bury its nose in the earth.

Our commissioner was a sedate Englishman of scholarly disposition. That afternoon, while he was sitting with perfect aplomb on the veranda of the International Club, conversing with various consuls' wives, Everhart, an American colleague, playfully and for the special delectation of the ladies, threw a double cannon far out, as he thought, on the tennis courts. As it landed it went off with magnificent volume. Then it hesitated, wriggled like a worm that has been stepped on, and shot with remarkable precision straight for the commissioner's chair. It fell at his feet and there it exploded with every ounce of its pent-up fury.

The commissioner, who wore a walrus mustache and looked inordinately like Rudyard Kipling, tipped inelegantly backwards. This also to the delectation of the ladies. And then he rose to his feet, righted the chair with a little venom, I thought, and said to my colleague, who was on the point of laughing but didn't quite know if it would be in order, "Everhart, you're an ass."

Everybody heard it and the bulk of us concurred.

But in a way I was secretly glad. For when Everhart first came to Moukden and was paying the commissioner an initial call, the latter, in discussing the study of the language, said, "You may find some difficulty in understanding the text at first. You know it's written in English."

That night within the precincts of the old palace we let forth a bedlam of noise. When the cannon crackers gave out we resorted to shotguns and small arms. Every window—they were mostly paper ones—was shattered by the concussion. When the affair was at its zenith I heard a tumultuous knocking at the gate. Opening it, I found a regiment of soldiery crowding through the narrow street. Heavy is the head that wears a crown! Poor little Chang Tso-lin thought the city was being attacked, so with true Napoleonic strategy he had become the aggressor. I explained what the noise signified, and the officer was gracefully making me a bow when a double cannon exploded over our heads and hurtled into the mass of soldiers to tell its second story. In the confusion that followed I shut and doublebarred the gate. How we regretted firing all our double cannon so early in the evening!

The bulk of my holidays were spent at

EMPERORS' TOMBS, MOUKDEN

the Manchu tombs. I rode thither on one or another of my ponies, my servant following with guns and wines and various edibles. To reach the little north gate I had to cross the city, and this was ever a matter of concern, for my pony had a most objectionable habit of tossing his head, and frequently he knocked down a man. Once down, the man would remain excessively inanimate, with one eye squinting, however, until I produced the necessary silver. All humans like to be benefactors. And whenever I went to the Manchu tombs I invariably raised a dozen people from the dead. But it became so costly that I had to discontinue crossing the city while astride. I have often wondered if my Chinese pony was in conspiracy with his own people against me.

Before reaching the emperors' tombs I was frequently reminded of my destination by the sight of numerous mounded graves. There are graves everywhere in China. One authority with a genius for figures calculated that a twelfth of the arable soil is given over to the repose of the dead. Suffice it to remark in passing that one of the chief obstacles to railway enterprise in the Middle Kingdom is dead men's bones. Point your finger where it listeth and it must designate a grave;

and graves are sacred, for the dead are more knowing, because closer to devils, than the living. They must be propitiated. Long live the dead!

Before I came to the Manchu tombs I passed our little golf course, which is an affair of nine holes. One of these holes is known as the "grave," and another as the "skeleton." The grave hole is just that; an open grave with the oblong box very much in evidence. The skeleton hole is just that also. Many times I have deftly recovered a 31 Dunlop ball which lay where once had pulsed a human heart. Irreverent, you suggest. No, gentle reader, I was never that. I always made a point of putting the ribs back exactly where I found them.

The approach to the Manchu tombs is one of the never-fading beauties of northern China. Imagine a desolate country,—the bare brown soil stretching as far as the eye can reach. A thousand years has it been denuded, for the need of humans for warmth is more imperative than the desire of the eye for a pleasing landscape. But here the trees are not cut down. It is as if the people intuitively knew that the souls of the dead were fragile diffident things that wanted shelter from the gaze of a toil-worn world. The tombs of China

are its most magnificent parks, its museums, its architectural relics.

First came smooth slopes that from a distance looked like closely shaven lawns. There was a little one-arch bridge over a stream fed by a tiny lake that ranged along one side of the road leading to the tombs. The road was flanked with Chinese pines, their twisted branches like writhing arms supplicating heaven. At equal distances strange stone creatures reared themselves out of the long grass, and I was not content till I rode out one evening by moonlight when I could imagine them animate, and very terrible they seemed.

A quarter of a mile away, glittering just over the tree tops, I discerned the roofs of the tombs, but it was not until I got near them that they broke on me with all the riotousness of their Oriental splendor. Upon the roofs of temples and tombs and palaces the Chinese have lavished the entire wealth of their creative imaginations. The roofs of Peiling, the north tombs, are mostly of yellow tile, and it is difficult to appreciate the rich beauty of them rising over the tops of the pines. The buildings comprising the tombs are surrounded by a red-washed wall that dips into little ravines and surmounts tiny

hills, seeming always to flow like a river of sheer color.

The resting place of the Manchu king is beneath a huge mound of earth faced with mortar. It must have taken innumerable hands to raise this mound alone. The old gatekeeper led me to the iron doors of the tomb and asked if he should recount the tale of the royal interment. I put a silver half dollar in the palm of his outstretched hand and told him to go ahead. Whereat he recounted a truly marvelous tale of the Orient of old.

The king had been buried in great state. His wife and numerous concubines had wept so copiously that their tears ran into the secret places of the earth, finally to bubble up an hundred years later in the form of the little lake outside the tomb. Jewels of immense value were sent by God's representative on earth, the great Dalai Lama himself, and these were buried with the emperor. All his gold and silver plate was interred with unprecedented pomp and pageantry. And finally the great teak coffin itself, with the mortal remains of the king, was borne through the courtyard and into the presence of the royal family who with one accord did their lord a final obeisance.

COFFIN BORNE THROUGH STREET

BUDDHIST PRIESTS INTONING FOR THE DEAD

The coffin was borne by eighty men who walked with it into the very bowels of the earth. Hardly had the cover of the sarcophagus been set in place before the iron doors closed forever and eighty poor humans who had never done anyone harm were entombed with their king. It was the old story of "dead men tell no tales." The royal family were unwilling to trust the knowledge of the jewels to anyone outside their circle. So they had given the order that the coffin bearers be entombed alive.

I could not help but look on this monumental grave with a shudder to think of the awful struggle that had taken place within. I could picture the unfortunate wretches beating in vain against the unyielding panels of the door. There must have gone up a sorrowful shriek to heaven. And I could imagine the royal family, the almond-eyed princesses no doubt turning tearfully away, pausing to listen to the abating tumult. For eighty men are a great number in a little place. The hole of Calcutta was nothing when compared to this, and yet this was nothing when compared to the Mongol prisons.

I have looked with mist-covered eyes into the face of what once had been a man. Poor fellow, he had committed a petty thievery,

for which he was sentenced to prison for the space of fifteen years. Had it been an ordinary prison he might have come out a man, but in this instance it were better had the punishment been capital. He was shut into a box too short to permit his lying extended and too low for him even to sit erect. A diamond-shaped hole was cut in the side of the box and this was all the means of ventilation and light he had. When I peered into his flashing eyes, for all his energy was gathered in his eyes, he had been imprisoned only seven years. His limbs were atrophied. He had become a mere automaton, a mockery of nature. I wanted to speak with him but I did not know his tongue, so I merely smiled, for I thought he would rather that I smile than do anything else. And I shall always remember how his eyes seemed to soften, as if he had not misinterpreted my meaning. There was a pitiful whining noise and I turned away.

For a thousand years the burial place of the Mongol kings was unknown. And it was only accidentally discovered. With the discovery of the underground tombs, documents were also uncovered pertaining to the manner of secreting the dead. The Mongols were high-spirited folk who paused at nothing. When

a king died, ten thousand soldiers were selected to flank the funeral cortège on either side to the distance of three miles. Every human being, man, woman, and child, was shot down until the final resting place was reached. Here the king was entombed and a thousand wild horses let loose over the ground to obliterate all trace of the interment. In this manner were the burying grounds of the Kings kept secret.

It was one of these kings or khans who in the thirteenth century conceived the idea of crossing the Ural Mountains, subduing Russia, and thence proceeding to Europe for purposes of conquest and annexation. Had not fate intervened I have little doubt that the yellow race would to-day be the rulers of the earth. But fate did intervene and superstition was his handmaiden. A prince of the royal blood died, and, according to Mongol custom, the court went into mourning for three years. Whereat the expedition to Europe was delayed and eventually abandoned. For the king was grieved at the death of his son and soon died, to be succeeded by one less ambitious and virile than he.

On those Sunday afternoons at the tombs I gave up most of my time to shooting. Often the party formed rather a considerable crowd,

so we would have a competition to see who could break the greatest number of bottles. The bottles, supposed to be pigeons, were thrown into the air by our servants, but by far the majority of them dashed themselves into fragments on the ground.

It was at one of these parties that a visiting commissioner, an Irishman from Dublin, recounted two singularly pleasing tales. They might be more fitly termed after-dinner stories. Fancy us seated under the open sky within the shadow of the Manchu tombs, great hawks circling over us and occasionally swooping down to a distance fifty feet above our heads. The Irish commissioner sat a little apart from the others and punctuated his narrative with frequent sips of wine.

"You might care to know an incident with regard to this vale of tears," he said, indicating the little lake with a movement of his hand.

"It was seven years ago that I was out here looking for duck with my servant. We were almost despairing of sighting any when I caught a glimpse of three riding the surface some hundred feet from the shore. Our shot were number eight, so we could not risk a try at so great a distance. Finally I told George, my native servant named for the King, God

bless him, to wade into the water a little way and see if he couldn't get near enough to risk a shot.

"So George waded in up to a depth commensurate with the calves of his legs.

"'Go in a little farther, George,' I admonished him.

"And George went in to a depth commensurate with the middle of his thighs. Still I would not let him risk a shot. The duck were restless and I did not want to return empty-handed.

"'A little farther, George,' I said.

"And George went in up to his middle. By this time the duck were making concentric circles around themselves. It would have been folly to shoot. So I told George to edge a little closer. The water was shallow, so he was quite a distance from the shore. With this last exhortation he went in to his armpits, his gun held over his head. The duck were quite visibly perturbed by now, so I implored George to take another step or two. He was by this time up to his neck in water. When suddenly the duck raised themselves as if to take wing and I cried out, 'Lie down, George, lie down, or they'll see you.'

"And would you believe it," the Irish commissioner finished, "George lay down."

This story led to another not so flagrantly humorous.

"Sir Wilkie Wilkinson," said the commissioner, "was publicly known to be excessively fond of his wife. He had not married until late in life and he seemed to appreciate this new-found attachment which was so unlike those he had previously known for his dogs and ponies. One day his wife died and the grief of Sir Wilkie was so great that he would have climbed into the grave and been buried with her, had not his friends prevented him.

"In time, however, his grief subsided, and to the astonishment of every one he took another wife. Everybody conceded this to be an even more satisfactory match than the preceding one. But like all delectable things it was of short duration. The second Lady Wilkinson took sick and died. And, remarkable to relate, Sir Wilkie would have climbed into the grave a second time had not his friends interfered.

"For a while Sir Wilkie was quite inconsolable. But in the end he resumed his interest in things mundane, which was quite as it should have been. However, his friends were not a little shocked when they discovered that he had made a passing English tourist the third Lady Wilkinson. Now I know I

am straining your credulity to the breaking point, but, would you believe it, poor Sir Wilkie had only been married to her six months when she passed over in a fit of apoplexy.

"At the grave his friends rather expected Sir Wilkie to exhibit violent emotion, but they did not think he would want to climb in again. But he did. And then one of his oldest acquaintances suggested that as poor Sir Wilkie would likely not survive this third and greatest sorrow, they might as well let him have his way. Though there was a divergence of opinion and no little reluctance among his friends, a majority of them finally agreed to allow Sir Wilkie to be interred with Lady Wilkinson.

"So poor broken-hearted Sir Wilkie Wilkinson climbed into the grave to be buried with his beloved. And do you know," said the commissioner, in finishing the tale, "they would have buried him, if he hadn't climbed out again."

CHAPTER VI

When one morning a captain attended by four soldiers presented me with a huge red envelope I could think of nothing but that the little governor had invited me to become his son-in-law. I involuntarily shuddered as I broke the yellow seal with the three characters signifying Chang Tso-lin grouped prettily in the center. I knew he had discovered me conversing with Li-ssu, but Li-ssu was only a child of some sixteen or eighteen years. To be sure, we had taken a fancy to each other. I taught her odds and ends of English nursery rhymes and she taught me Chinese funny stories. One day I discovered her telling me Jack and the Beanstalk and when I asked her how she happened to know it, she replied that one of the Tartar princesses had recounted it for her during a sojourn in Peking. Had I been a Chinese I should have liked to marry Li-ssu. She was beautiful; she was demure; she was intelligent. And I must own, too, that there were times when I even went so far in my dreams as to wish I were a native prince

or brigand or just plain cavalier, for there were fairy queens a-plenty.

But the huge red envelope did not pertain to little Li-ssu. It was simply an invitation from her father to attend the annual ceremonial worship of the Lamas of Lhassa. There are only two Lama temples in the Middle Kingdom; one is at Moukden, the other outside Peking. Each year the priests journey down from Tibet, skirting the Gobi desert on camels, and incurring every conceivable danger, for the paraphernalia of their rite is of enormous value. They bring with them beautiful jewels and the most costly robes and an almost infinite amount of gold and silver coins. A foreigner cannot penetrate the holy of holies unless he be invited by high authority. So I was not unconscious of the honor done me by Chang Tso-lin.

By ten o'clock of the following morning I was crossing the city, borne almost imperceptibly along by the immense crowd of natives who, unlike me, were bent on satiating their consciences as well as their curiosities. It was a gala morning and reminded me most nearly of the day when the circus came to town and everyone as a matter of custom repaired to the big white tent. The Chinese themselves were not dressed with any particu-

lar degree of brilliancy. The Manchu women are more somber in their dress than the southern or Tartar women. Elsewhere the women lavish attention on the color of their clothes. The Manchu dresses customarily in blue or black. And where the southern woman does her hair tightly about her head, with perhaps two saucer-like plaits covering her ears, the Manchu matron gets hers done up after the manner of a diminutive Eiffel Tower. Either they sleep sitting or they don't sleep at all, for surely a day were not sufficient to erect this variety of peaks and cascades and gables. Then, too, the Manchu women have really lovely complexions of the glowing peach variety. I could never conceive of men being cannibals until I went to Moukden. I have often been tempted to bite the cheek of a Manchu woman to see if it were really flesh and blood.

When I arrived at the gate of the temple I found the British consul, together with his wife and his daughter, already there. We waited until we were joined by the Danish postal commissioner, the French and Russian and American consuls, and other dignitaries of the port, and then proceeded into the courtyard, where we were met by the high priest himself. He came smilingly to meet us,

holding up the hem of his satin robe with one hand while he dangled a gorgeous peacock fan with the other. His head was shaven and he was fat and of a rosy countenance. His robe was for the most part yellow, but not brightly so. Rather was the color rich and deep, so that I fancied I could have buried my fingers in the smoothest part of the garment. His shoes were of yellow satin also, and there were heavy gold rings on his fingers and an amber necklace around his neck, the necklace terminating in a large amulet of purest jade. He wore a beaten silver belt around his waist, and from this a string of polished beads depended to within an inch of the ground.

The priest signified that we should follow him into the temple. So we passed into another courtyard crowded with people, among them being a fair sprinkling of priests whose gorgeous robes afforded a striking contrast to the blues and blacks of the commoners. A number of chairs had been placed at the left of the altar and thither we were led by our priest. He left us with another smiling bow and took up his place in front of the biggest and most demoniacal-looking god, which latter was flanked by two lesser images only a shade less terrible in countenance.

At first the priest seemed to be telling his

beads, but in the end he lifted his head and let out a sort of war whoop which was the signal for six others, a little farther back, to commence beating their kettledrums. At this juncture twelve little boys came out of the obscurity of the walls twirling brass prayer wheels, contrivances with inter-revolving cylinders capable of saying ten thousand prayers with a single twist of the thumb.

I was totally unprepared for what happened next, for I fancied from the din in my ears that the climax of the ceremony had been reached. But although the remainder of the rite was less noisy than the beginning it was far more colorful and as truly Oriental as anything I have seen. Two devils (I will not call them men) danced out of opposite ends of the altar and with a skipping step, singularly childlike, proceeded towards the center of the court. Each of them carried a baton to mark the rhythm of the dance. When they reached the center of the court they stopped their motion, laid their batons over their hearts, bowed to the encircling sea of faces, then sprang with surprising agility into the air. When they landed on their feet again a concealed orchestra had begun to play and the devils took up their dance.

The first pair of devils represented huge

AN ABANDONED TEMPLE AT MOUKDEN

WHIRLING DEVILS

frogs. That is, they wore huge masks resembling frogs' heads, though the rest of them were satin robes of an exquisite purple. After a little I discovered that the devils looked through their mouths, which were open and about on a level with the eyes of the men within. Considering that neither devil paid the slightest heed to what the other was doing, it was indeed remarkable that they danced in such perfect accord.

They danced and they whirled and they danced, their batons all the time spinning gracefully in their fingers, one hand now on their hips and now extended straight into the air. The heat was frightful and I expected to see them collapse much sooner than they did. It was like a Spanish bullfight. No sooner did these frog devils fall exhausted to the ground than they were carried off to make room for two tiger devils, who did a different dance and whose robes were quite appropriately of orange and black with tails to complete the illusion.

Every now and again the tiger devils emitted a growl in unison, but I could not help remarking that each time it became fainted and fainter, until finally the tiger devils tumbled in black and orange heaps to be borne away and replaced by deer devils

with magnificent branching antlers. The deer devils were more playful than their colleagues had been. Their dance was of a distinctly lighter nature, or so it seemed to an onlooker who was not in the glare of the sun.

But eventually the deer devils succumbed to be replaced by elephant devils who, according to my watch, danced exactly three minutes and twenty-nine seconds before their mighty heads began to sag. In another instant they looked as if they had been shot. A priest at my elbow ventured the information that occasionally a devil died and that it was a devil's greatest aspiration to die in a dance, for in this way were they deified. I suggested that perhaps it would be more satisfactory, at least from the devils' point of view, to deify them if they survived. But the priest simply folded his hands and said, "*Bu hsing*—that would never do." And I suppose he was right. If you made deification too easy there would be little use in becoming a god. Who among us Westerners, I wonder, would voluntarily die to achieve the godhead?

I was especially interested in noting what effect these ceremonies had on the populace. But outside of the bulging eyes of numerous children I could not discover that they had any effect at all. There was a good deal of

laughing and talking going on throughout the dances, and I imagine the Chinese thought that the rites atoned for their sins. Of course, the natives are not concerned with this matter of sin. Their civilization is nearer that of the Garden of Eden before the Fall than any I have yet encountered. On the other hand I could not help expecting them to be a little more reverential and, say, less curious. I did not expect them to be so utterly pagan about it as I was. But even so, the chief priest connived with me in my scheme.

I had taken along my camera in the hopes of getting some interesting, if not altogether rare snapshots. But I hadn't the heart to desecrate the ceremony by standing out from the others. By good chance, however, the priest noticed my camera, and pointing to the devils, he signified in sign language that I should go ahead. So I slunk along the wall until I reached a point opposite the devils. I took a variety of pictures. I got the devils in all conceivable postures. Also I photographed one or two priests in gorgeous saffron robes. By some rare intuitive forethought I reserved one exposure for anything else I might happen upon in my rambles around the temple. Whether or not I did wisely I must leave to the judgment of the reader.

After the dance of the devils, the priests went back to their mummery and the crowd, not anticipating any new spectacular event, gradually dispersed. I found myself outside the main entrance watching an old wizened-up man clean a basket of oranges. His hands were excessively dirty and he was polishing the fruit with a cloth of unequal whiteness. I merely recount these details to give you the picture. I was long since used to uncleanliness in the native.

The old man exercised a sort of fascination over me, he was so small and so active, so inordinately like a busy bee flitting over a yellow chrysanthemum, the yellow chrysanthemum in this instance being the basket of oranges. I stood riveted to the ground, he all the time sublimely unaware of my presence.

I, in turn, was sublimely unaware of two others who stood a little out of my line of vision until I heard a sweetly modulated feminine voice ask some one if she were not tired of standing. I turned quickly toward them. The some one proved to be an old Manchu lady of seventy or eighty years who was smoking a very long pipe. She wore a long black coat, the only articles of adornment being her silver crescent-shaped earrings and a

funny round hat with two blue streamers falling down her neck. If she hadn't had such an extremely grandmotherly look about her she would have seemed grotesque. It was odd that I should have watched her so long before noting the owner of the sweetly modulated voice. When I did look at her, it was with somewhat of a start, for I was not expecting to find such an extravagant type of beauty anywhere in China. Good complexions were not a rarety. But beauty, in the Western sense of the word, one seldom happened on.

But she was beautiful, and young, and in fact everything that the gods adore. Her hair was done after the immemorial style. It needed but a glance to know that she was no longer a virgin. She stood with her hands under her outer coat and she was looking at me from the corners of her eyes, rich black Oriental eyes in which a wealth of emotion shimmered. The old lady was as stolid as an owl and white-cheeked with age. The young woman was the picture of youth and freshness. Her cheeks were high and her nose only slightly spatulate. Her lips, unlike those of most Chinese women, were not straight, but the bow of them was delicately curved upwards, and though they were full and sensuous, there was no suggestion of pouting; and her

chin lay under them with a firm but unobtrusive prominence.

I said she was smiling at me; nor is it my intention to retract these words. I suppose the gayety of the carnival, for all Chinese ceremonies partake of the nature of the carnival, had somehow gotten beneath her skin, making her tingle for the new and unusual. I was frankly astounded to see her smile, but I had not been smiled at by one so beautiful in a weary while, so happily enough I quickly smiled at her in return. The old lady drew incessantly with little short puffs on her long-stemmed pipe.

I had a premonition that matters would eventually draw to a head, which in this case meant that I should be left standing there alone, watching the wizened man flit over his oranges. So when the young woman smiled at me again I tapped my camera and pointed it toward her, nodding my head quickly up and down with only a suggestion of uncertainty in my eyes. She laughed with hers and looked significantly towards the old lady, as much as to say, "If you can do it without her knowledge, you have my permission." There was really nothing more to be said, so I turned my back on them, adjusted my lens for eight feet and, when I thought

everything was right, I wheeled sharply around and clicked my shutter without so much as even raising my eyes. It was the final exposure and I immediately turned it through for fear I should forget and use it again. The resulting picture is the gem of my collection.

But the incident did not end here. A Peking cart stood in the background, and in a little while the old lady, putting her pipe into a long bag that hung at her waist, walked over to it, clambered in and lay down for a nap. The last words I heard her say to her granddaughter, for such manifestly was the relation between them, were, "*Pieh ts'ou*—don't wander off." And the young woman replied "*Shih*," which is a word of assent.

As soon as the old lady was safely tucked away, the younger one looked me frankly in the face and asked, "*Te le mo?*—did you get it?" And then, when I told her I got it, she wanted to see it, and I had to explain that it wasn't yet ready to see. I added that if she would tell me where she lived I would send her a print through the mail. But she answered that this was out of the question. And then we fell into conversation.

"You are married," I said.

She looked at me a little sorrowfully, I thought, before she made reply.

"What a pity!" she said finally.

"Why do you say that?" I asked, genuinely concerned for the nature of her answer.

"I like you," she responded guilelessly.

"But you must love your husband," I interjected quickly.

"It is not necessary," she answered, enfolding her fingers diffidently against her coat.

"That is not understandable talk to me," I suggested.

"I was only married to him a week when he went off to Peking. If only he had simply said good-by and gone, but he spoke many, many words of explanation, and his letters are all explanation why he does not return. His is understandable talk. He loves another woman." She pouted when she spoke this last and her mouth was prettier than ever. Her face, too, flushed with the admission she had made, took on an eminent beauty that removed her from any I had seen before.

"And so you are left alone," I ventured solicitously.

"Yes, alone," she replied. And then she went on, "It would not be so bad if I could go out and do as he has done. In China men make customs and women observe them. I am customary but I am not a fool."

"No, you are not a fool," I assented.

THE GIRL OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE

"My old grandmother here watches me like a hawk. She suspects nothing. She merely watches me because it is her duty. A woman is always watched until she gets so old; then they set her watching somebody else."

"And the men?" I queried, somewhat lightly, I fear. In the light of this fear, her answer was distinctly illuminating.

"You are a man. You know," she said.

"But how," I asked, turning this thrust aside, "how do you happen to have such advanced ideas? You are the first woman of standing I have ever spoken with. The bulk of your sisters are feather-brained,—*feng nao-tzu*, a windy head."

"I read novels that were not meant to fall into my hands. The princesses have always revolted. Those of royal blood can do much against custom and still retain their honor."

"Yes, that is the way all over the world," I answered.

"But some day, if he doesn't come back soon, I shall slip off and find love somewhere."

"You don't mean to say you would dare do this?"

"I would do anything to find the love the princesses found in the novels."

"But don't you see, that love was ideal. It wouldn't happen exactly like that in real life."

"But if I made it happen like that!"

"But could you?" I demanded, with ruffled brows.

She looked at me rather saucily, it seemed, for a number of seconds. I felt a rush of blood to my brain. Could this be a Chinese woman? I had never met her like before. All the others had been poor pent-up hearts that did not know a single throbbing emotion. But this, this one was different. She looked at me saucily, I thought, and then sudenly she became almost severe. I could nearly imagine her stamping her silken-shod foot, which, though small, was fortunately not of the lily variety.

"Could you?" I repeated, when I had regained control of my senses.

"What do you think?" she asked, her eyes melting with tenderness.

"You could," I answered at last, feeling that for at least once in my life I had been true to myself.

We stood looking at each other for an unconscionable time with the little old man rustling his oranges close by. He evidently had not paid any attention to what we were saying. His heart was in the tips of his fingers. He wipcd, rubbed, rustled, and wiped again.

The Peking cart creaked ominously and the eyes of the young woman froze on the instant. The old lady was rousing herself for another smoke. I got one last tender look, one that I shall always treasure, and then the young beauty turned away. Mistletoe, like the nests of large birds, hung in all the trees. There was a prodigality of the gentle shrub. And it mocked me as she walked away. For of what use was it in a civilization such as this? Red lips, red lips, everywhere, and nary a one to kiss.

The night fell like a quick blanket over all, and the blue sky heaved up from the rim of the tired world.

CHAPTER VII

On the 21st of August, 1917, a telegram came into Moukden out of the clearest tropical sky I have ever yet known. The skies of China are a joy forever. During the summer the blue vault shrinks away until it becomes the veriest azure mist, like a ceiling seen in St. Peter's. In winter it forms a canopy of cobalt blue, so near that you fancy you could touch it if only you were a little higher up, like the farther hills whose peaks seem to keep the sky from enveloping the earth. At night it seems magically near. But my telegram dropped out of a midday sky with the sun flaring away toward the zenith and the blue forced down until it formed an azure tinted ribbon along the rim of the hills.

The telegram was brief and to the point. I was transferred to Tientsin. And being a neophyte and not accustomed to dallying with authority, that very evening found me southward bound. For the last time I saw Moukden, or as the Chinese call it Feng T'ien, Wind of Heaven, lying there in the windless warmth

"EASY STREET," TIENTSIN

TEMPLE OF CONFUCIUS

of the morning. The city walls encircled everything, and together with the outlying Japanese district formed an immense blot on the landscape, as if a huge tortoise had crawled up from the sea to sleep. The Lama temples swayed their jeweled heads as a sign of departure, and in another instant the hurrying shadows had obliterated everything but the unending earth.

Tientsin, or T'ien Ching, means an inland harbor. It is the port of Peking, though itself situated forty miles inland on the banks of the muddy Pei Ho, river out of the north. When I got to Tientsin I found that I was not expected, so instead of remaining in the foreign concessions which, though unique, are a travesty on the East, I sought the Chinese city, obtaining a room in a native inn less than a hundred yards from my office.

The room looked out on the courtyard of a temple of Confucius and was at no little elevation so that I had a view of the entire city and the open country beyond. Since the Boxer uprising no walls have surrounded the native city. What were once the sites of massive masonry are now broad roads with electric cars clanking over them. Still it is China, for the Chinese are not a superficial people. They bend but they do not break.

That first night in Tientsin I was no sooner settled comfortably in my bed than a horrible groaning commenced directly beneath my window. I rose, bent far out and looked down, but I could make out nothing. I was forty feet up in the air and the city pressed in on every side; and though I was high above it, I felt as if it were struggling about my feet. I visualized the turmoil under the hundred thousand roofs. I shuddered and went back to sleep.

But sleep was not destined to be my lot that night. I had barely extended my limbs when the groaning was renewed with more vigor than before. Now it was low, like a child suffering. Now it rose to a sort of wail, like an infant bereft of its mother. And in another instant it had changed to a shriek, like that of a strong man in a burst of anger.

I lay there imagining everything under the sun. Was some one being murdered under my very window, or had they merely been beaten and robbed? The sounds came as if from the earth. Then I remembered an alleyway that ran beside the inn. With this thought I jumped out of bed and thrust my head far into the night, calling to know what on earth was the matter below. I kept up my importunities until some one answered and demanded in a

raucous voice to know what was the matter with me. It was the venerable gatekeeper who had been awakened by my summons, and when I told him to investigate the alleyway he swore wheezy swear-words, as he thought, under his breath. I heard him moving heavily about. Then in a few seconds he cried out, "There's a sick man lying on the ground. *Na mei shen mo*," he said, before closing the door of his little hut, as if that was all I wanted to know.

"That's of no consequence," was the import of his phrase. And then I realized that I was still in the clutches of this pagan monster. A man might fall down dying and everyone would pass by on the other side until he was dead. Dead men smell by and by, so dead men are carted away to the tombs. But the living can take care of themselves. I instinctively revolted against such a philosophy, but in a world like this, I thought, it is inevitable. Does a man conquer nature or does nature conquer man? I was finding myself in the throes of a great deterministic fatalism, and I rose to the occasion and became a fatalist.

I slept, and in the morning I went to my window and looked down. The man lay quietly just below. His blue cloak was drawn

back and over his face. After all, there was a touch of decency in these folk. I saw the old gatekeeper emerge from his hut.

"So he died, did he?" I called down.

"*Shih, t'a ssu lo,*" he answered, his features set in a sort of imperturbable grin.

That afternoon, when I came home, the man no longer lay there. The city which represented the living had done its last duty by the dead. By permutations and combinations I decided that it would not recur just there in another million years. My sleep was not broken again.

The Pei Ho curls insinuatingly through the heart of the city. I write "insinuatingly" because every now and then a hut tumbles into it, for there is a continual sucking at its banks, as if its bosom harbored a selfish demon who was jealous of the encroachments of man. When a hut tumbles into the river, a quantity of pigs, chickens, and humans tumble with it. So the demon achieves a double advantage. Not only does he lessen man's handiwork, but he diminishes man himself. The river is the gay destroyer. Everything foul is poured into it, but its stamina is truly wonderful. It goes chuckling, hurrying by, to vomit its ill-gotten gain into the sea. Man drinks of its water and vile pestilences arise, merely a re-

turn of evil for evil. But is there then no good? The night is a compensation for many things. Come onto the river at night.

I used to take my boat five miles into the country. There was a university nestled in a grove of acacia trees and I had friends who were teachers there. In the afternoon I would creep along the vile-smelling banks until the city was left behind. There would be a cup of tea, rich foreign food with delicious condiments, and then I would slip into my boat again and journey back under the stars.

The lap of the waters was music in my ear. The fresh night air had blown every undesirable odor away. And I reclined on my cushions breathing in the limpid nectar of evening. Little villages twinkled along the banks. Boats were continually passing us and we passing them. I remember one gorgeous affair with uniformed rowers. Light feminine laughter reached my listless ears, and I was no longer listless. Could this be one of the love boats of which I had heard so much, not from the mouths of men, but from the pages of olden novels?

There was once a maid on the Soochow creek who had been bereft of her lover by another beauty. Did she pay him back in kind? Ah, no. She put all her savings into a love boat

and plied up and down the creek, singing silvery songs that charmed the heart of every listener. She permitted no man to be with her. The love boat was her convent and she was singing her life away.

One evening, when he had grown weary of his newly acquired mistress, the erstwhile lover heard a song of his beloved coming out of the distance. He listened enchanted. Slowly the boat came near. And as it went by, he dove silently into the water, meaning to swim to her and claim her as of old. But the beauty of the song had stolen away his senses, and so he perished between two loves, the one abandoned, the other sought.

But the river was not always so beautiful at night. It had a tragedy of its own, which was the more terrible because enshrouded in darkness. One evening, when we were slipping down with the current, I heard a plaintive cry not far away. It was the only sound that came to my ear, so I was prone to heed it. I signaled my rowers to turn their oars against the current and then I looked in the direction of the sound.

Silhouetted against the twilight blue of the sky stood a woman with a child in her arms. She was on the poop of a barge perhaps a hundred feet to my right. Near her, towering

RIVER SCENE, TIENTSIN

CRIMINALS ON THE WAY TO BE SHOT

above her threateningly, was another figure, that of a man, her husband and lord, I suppose. After a little I could distinguish his words. He was rebuking her for having borne him a daughter instead of a son. She stood silent before him, the child wailing pitifully in her arms. The man was intoxicated with his grievance. He waved his arms violently about, and for a moment I thought he was about to strike her. But, after abusing her for upwards of fifteen minutes, he turned away. The woman stood like one rooted to the earth. Her face was bent down to the little face in her arms. There was only one way out, and before I could utter a cry there was a soft splash and the waters had closed over them.

I lay back with a sickening sense of helplessness. I was near to murder that night. And I never went on the river for pleasure again. It seemed as though some one should have seen, should have heard, should have prevented all this. But I alone saw and heard, and I was powerless to prevent. The current bore me down and I hated it for its urgent power.

My offices were in the very heart of the city and I could look into the swirl and push of life with a minimum of effort. Countless human feet drummed and shuffled the face of the

earth. There was a continual coming and going, and to what end? The feet came and went, came and went, and I discovered that what is true of this great pagan culture is true of the cultures of our Western world. There is an eternal evolving, the circle ever expands, the source grows dim, but the central force is tireless. Man is the end of man, and beyond man lies the infinite.

One Saturday afternoon, while seated leisurely at my desk, I was aware of music that sounded strangely familiar. The source of the music was a band, and the band was the first I had heard since leaving America. It was a slow solemn dirge and I could fancy the musicians pacing steadily along like men with leaded shoes. I listened, and finally the music resolved itself into a name. It was Chopin's "Funeral March."

The afternoon was like a New England autumn one with the sky overcast with gray clouds and a fresh wind blowing the crisp air hither and thither. I looked into the street and saw a great crowd moving with a nearly imperceptible motion. In a little while a cortège came into sight. The band was directly behind it, and behind the band there walked a number of men in European dress. I remembered then that the wife of the

president of the university had died. This, then, was her funeral. I had seen them married,—he a graduate of Harvard and she of Wellesley; both of them singularly fine Chinese. Had the matter been brought to my attention earlier, I should have been walking there too. But as it was, I could only look with pitying eyes.

The band passed on and I was about to turn away from the window when I noticed a second procession come into view. This one was headed by mounted soldiers who cleared the streets for other soldiers on foot. These last bulwarked ten or a dozen 'rickshaws, which in their turn were followed by a troop of cavalry. The men in the 'rickshaws were ill-clad and their faces wore a disheartened look, as if they were alone in the world. A thousand curious eyes were turned in their direction, and search as the condemned men would, there was not an eye shedding a beam of sympathy. I turned to a Chinese assistant at my elbow. He only confirmed my fears.

By a singular turn of fate Chopin's "Funeral March" was doing a double duty. For the procession that followed the funeral cortège was that of men condemned to die. Death walked before the band and imminent death stalked behind. The poor wretches who were

about to be shot had no ears for music just then. But still the music played on, and I could hear it long after both processions passed out of sight.

My Chinese assistant, in leaving the window, remarked, quite by the way, that an old executioner's son was among my office force. I demanded at once to be shown him. He turned out to be an open-faced boy of excellent habits.

"So your father is an executioner," I said, after formal greetings had been exchanged.

"*Shih*," he replied, bobbing his head awkwardly up and down as Chinese youth will in the presence of those they deem their superiors.

"But I don't suppose he has much to do now. He is an executioner of the old school, isn't he?"

"The sword, you mean?"

"Yes, the sword," I answered.

"*Shih*," he articulated again; meaning that he gave assent to my proposition that his father employed the sword.

"Tell your father that I shall pay him a visit one of these days."

The youth only bowed in reply and then almost immediately requested to be permitted to go home and inform his worthy father.

I had no intention of visiting him that afternoon but when my assistant remarked that they would be expecting me, I went.

The old executioner was quite feeble now. There was nothing extraordinary about his face. I did not expect to find it beautiful. And I was surprised not to find it coarse. He must have been a big man in his day, for even bent over as he was he loomed large in the doorway. After chatting in a commonplace manner, I asked him if he knew how many souls he had freed.

"*I wan ta liao, chiu wang lo,*" he replied, without an instant's hesitation.

A free translation of what he said was, "I lopped off ten thousand; then I lost count."

Under the circumstances I thought his composure remarkable. Perhaps he was only feigning. So I put some more questions.

"After an especially busy day, could you sleep well?" I asked. I meant to ask if his conscience were not troubled commensurately with the number of his victims. But evidently the old executioner had no conscience.

"The busier the day, the better I slept," he replied, without a suggestion of humor.

"But weren't you ever bothered by your business? Didn't you sometimes feel like a common murderer?"

The old executioner elevated his eyes at this. "I never used the knife," he said. "I was offered big pay to do the seven cuts, but I washed my hands of torture. No, I should starve before I would torture. Only a brute will torture."

"Then the mere business of lopping off heads meant nothing to you."

"Ah, the business; that meant a great deal. It meant food for me and my family. But you see, I did not allow the personal relation to enter into it. I never had dealings with friends. As for the others, I saw nothing except a little band of flesh. I swung and passed on. For such things I have no memory."

So there was a code of honor among executioners! They would not descend to torture, but they had no compunctions at killing. And, notice, the old executioner never once used the words kill or cut. When he said "*I wan ta liao*," he merely "hit" ten thousand. The rest of it was an affair of natural mechanics. It has long been known to students of medical and the allied sciences that a man cannot exist separately from his head.

To illustrate what he meant by murder, the old executioner told me the story of a Cantonese governor who was at a loss to devise means of ridding his province of lepers. Finally

he hit upon an idea. Inasmuch as most of the lepers congregated either in or near the capital, he posted a notice to the effect that if all the afflicted ones would gather at a certain secluded spot, they would have their ills attended to after being given a sumptuous repast.

So the poor wretches came until they numbered some three hundred souls. A great cellar had been dug in the ground and here the tables were laid and heaped high with everything good to eat. The unsuspecting lepers went down into the cellar, and true to his word the governor gave them the banquet. Then, without warning, he attended to their ills. Several companies of soldiers had been drawn up as if for an affair of state. At a given signal they commenced firing into the pit and they did not cease until there was no longer any movement there. The excavated earth was shoveled back, and thus was the province ridded of leprosy.

On the one hand I was continually confronted with the ugliness and squalor of life, and on the other with the beauty of pageantry. Ordinarily the streets were dull, colorless thoroughfares through which the teeming thousands ceaselessly poured. But now and again they would be lit with Oriental splendor. The

funeral processions especially were gorgeous contrasts to the humdrum of existence. Sometimes they were a mile long; the predominating color being red. They were brilliant spectacles and every bit of them was bought and paid for. Even the men in white, who wept so copiously that their tears wetted the dusty earth, received their pieces of silver.

Almost countless children bore striking banners. Musicians and shaven priests contributed their modicums of sound and mummery. Marvelously carved temples in miniature, the deceased's favorite chair with his picture on the cushion, triumphal arches with inscriptions recounting his achievements and public benefactions, perhaps his pony or even his dog,—all these bewildered the eye with splendid confusion.

I could almost be glad that some one had passed on, so long as the senses of the populace were so variously gratified. One day, looking out of my window, I saw them making sacrifices in the Temple of Confucius. I believe it was the anniversary of the great teacher's birth. A bullock and two sheep were laid upon the altar and then the whole assemblage, resplendently dressed, gathered round while priests in yellow robes told their beads and made their obeisances to the shade of the Immortal K'ung Fu-tzu.

It was like passages of the Old Testament being rehabilitated before my very eyes. On the other side was the Great East Road, where thousands were bent on the sordid business of filling their stomachs. But here in this painted cloister the cares of the world were thrust away. The sheer beauty of romance dominated everything. If this is not worship, I thought, then there is not a God.

CHAPTER VIII

Because Hersey Baird, Princetonian and wealthy sportsman, had been disappointed in love and had come to China to marry a princess was no reason why he should want me to do the same. But when I met him on the steps of the Custom House and he invited me to meet the sister of his beloved, I had not the heart to refuse him. In the ordinary course of events I could never hope to meet a princess. Hersey Baird was intending to devote his wealth to the founding of a college, and I have a suspicion, a very faint one, that he saw in me a likely assistant to his plans. Had I, too, been disappointed in love, there is no telling what might have occurred, but I had not then ever fallen in love. And then to meet a princess who was all that the name implies was truly incurring the enmity of the gods.

That same evening I went to his home. But it was only by a turn of fate that I met his wife's sister, the princess Ssu-ling. It seems that a son and heir had recently come to the home. Madame Baird had him brought in

for my special inspection. He was an odd little bit of humanity with round black eyes and silken hair, with his father's nose and his mother's lips. His cheek bones were Tartar, his chin of Mongolian cast.

In announcing his existence the father called him simply a child. Perhaps he thought I ought to know that Great Luck would bring him a son. But as the facts of the matter stood, I was entirely unaware of the sex of the little thing. So, cudgeling my brain for the appropriate word, I asked the proud mother if the child were a cow or a donkey. My mistake was apparent to her at once. I had meant to ask if the child were a boy or a girl, but I mixed my tones with the above lamentable result. We laughed merrily over the mistake and were about to settle into a serious conversation when a peal of merriment broke on us from an adjoining room.

My friend had informed me at the moment of my arrival that the princess Ssu-ling was indisposed and probably would not be able to see me. But her indisposition must have been singularly temperamental, for no sooner did a sense of my error dawn on her than she went into spasms of laughter. In another instant she was standing in the doorway and my soul was in my eyes.

The princess Ssu-ling was neither small nor large but of such delicate proportion that I rather felt than saw the bewitching grace of her. Her features, though unmistakably Tartar, reminded me of the women of northern Italy. Her skin was slightly olive, with the color flushing through as though she were perpetually embarrassed. Her eyes opened wide and had a certain liquid quality about them so that they seemed like unfathomable lakes with the bottoms temptingly near, so persistently did they harbor emotions of one kind or another. Her blue-black hair was parted cleanly in the middle and drawn tightly down in two jet braids that lay like woven circular mats over her ears. Gold pendant earrings dropped nearly to her shoulders. Besides these, of ornamentation there was not a sign.

She was wearing a long coat of jade-green silk with a handsome pattern of embroidery fringing it. The sleeves of the coat fell some inches short of her wrists, exposing shapely arms that tapered into jewelless fingers. Beneath the hem of the coat I glimpsed two silken slippers of a color like the sky on winter evenings. It was as if the doorway were a frame to her, and when she finally stepped out of it and advanced to the center of the

room, I closed my eyes, for it seemed they must be deceiving me. But when I looked again, she was still standing there, her head bent coyly down, her fingers gently interlocked, as though she were expecting me to speak.

We were presented to each other with a minimum of ceremony, though I had imagined many ceremonious acts. These were to be reserved for a later hour, not that night, but weeks hence, when she understood my faltering Chinese tongue. Soon I discovered that she spoke French prettily and this became the medium of our interchange of thought. It was like meeting on a foreign soil. It enhanced the magic of our friendship.

Just outside the Japanese concession there is a large Chinese park, and thither Ssu-ling and I were wont to go on balmy summer evenings. In China a park is called a Kuang Yuen-tzu, or a place where one may wander. During the summer thousands of Chinese of the better class frequent the Ta T'ien Lou. There is a little theater where portions of popular plays are staged. It was interesting to watch the players strut about, each one, while he was saying his lines, occupying the center of attention. A servant comes in to announce that dinner is being served. This he accom-

plishes with an immense flourish, as if the dénouement of the act depended on the right enunciation of his paltry lines. He goes off and another takes his place. In a Chinese play everybody, for the time being, is a star.

It is not impolite to talk during a performance, though for the most part the audience is strikingly attentive. I did notice, however, that although people seemed inclined to listen they were not so particular about looking at the stage. The greater part of the time it seemed as though they were watching Ssu-ling and me. I could not blame them for watching her, and I suppose they thought it odd that we should be together.

Every now and then a little laugh escaped her and I knew some subtle turn of the text had evaded my knowledge of her tongue. When anything particularly pleased her, I always requested that she put it in French. This she did with a little hesitating lisp in her voice, as if there were something she wished to palliate in the translation. When she finished she would invariably peer questioningly into my eyes and demand, "*Comprenez-vous?*" And whether I had or not, I always looked searchingly back at her and replied, "*Oui, oui.*"

After the theater we walked again into the open and waited for the fire display. Every

evening the management arranged a brilliant show of fireworks, the like of which I have never witnessed in any other land. Two huge posts were placed some ten feet apart and extending fifty into the air. Upon a number of crosspieces the mystic boxes and papers were fixed. I have seen a whole pantomimic play in burning colored powder. Men, women, and children, fantastically dressed, dropped from a point seemingly only a little lower than the stars. It was indescribably beautiful, and as a mere mechanical contrivance worthy of the subtlest brains. Rarely did the paper images ignite, and then the delicate tissues burnt so quickly that unless one were unduly attentive he would think it a part of the scheme.

But the portions of the park I shall hold in most pleasing remembrance are the rustic seats on a little rocky hill overlooking an artificial lake. Here Ssu-ling and I always eventually repaired. Here we exchanged our most intimate thoughts, and here I discovered the magical subtlety of her mind.

"Did it never strike you as strange," I said to her one evening, "that you and I should be sitting here together, you a princess and I, well, just what I am?"

"*Wo ti* Hsi Kung—my western prince,"

for thus it was that she loved to address me, "*Wo ti* Hsi Kung, have you so soon forgotten the fable of the lonely hearts?"

"Then it is because you are lonely that you permit me these sweet moments?"

"I was lonely, Hsi Kung, but no longer am I so. Do you forget that the blood of the Ghargis Khans flows in my veins and that I cannot, nor would I, walk with common men."

"Then the fact of my being a Westerner compensates for much."

"You are like a jealous child, Hsi Kung. Because you haven't the blood of the Ghargis Khans you despise that which you have."

"Which is very little, Ssu-ling."

"Is Ssu-ling then content with so little? Your talk changes, Hsi Kung. A little since, and the universe was my footstool. Must I now cherish only the littler stars?"

As I had not the language to answer such beautiful arguments, we fell to talking of God.

"What is your opinion of all this?" I asked, indicating the starry vault with a sweep of my arm.

"It is more precious than these," she answered, turning the briefest instant to look on the moving sea of faces.

"More precious than man?" I queried, with feigned surprise.

MARKET PLACE WITH SHRINE

A STUDENT, HIS WIFE AND HIS AUNT

"Shall I tell you the story of the aged philosopher who discovered God?"

"*Shih*," I whispered, for I was not unconscious of the solemnity of her thought.

Ssu-ling leaned forward, her face aglow with Vega's yellow light. She spoke in her native tongue. It was a simple story, requiring a simple language.

"There was once a sage who employed his whole lifetime seeking for a manifestation of the One you call God. He wandered up and down the faces of the earth, peering into the hearts of men, but God was not there. Instead he saw evil thoughts, and misery, and vile plagues which scourged the land as a thresher flails out grain.

"In his quest he grew to be an old man. Finally despairing of the inhabited regions of the kingdom, he sought the seclusion of the hills and mountains. He had given up his quest. His only thought was to find a solitary place and die.

"Towards evening of a glorious day he toiled upwards to the top of a thickly wooded hill. He was worn and feeble with age. At times it seemed unlikely he would reach the top. But he did reach the top just as the sun was seeking India.

"He saw a fertile valley lying extended

like a carpet of many colors. A little stream, a ribbon of silver, glistened far below. Beautiful plants and flowers clustered in silent profusion at his feet. And over everything the declining sun shed his impartial benediction.

"The aged philosopher staggered erect, abandoning his cracked and shriveled cane, clasping his withered hands in childlike ecstasy, while his soul drank in the immortal beauty of nature.

"At last," he cried, "at last I have found it. Now I die happy. Surely this is a sight for God alone."

In time Ssu-ling went away to her home in the Western Hills. I was despondent until she told me the Western Hills were a locality near Peking. For it is near the Western Hills that the old emperors had their summer palaces. Here they came to play and escape the affairs of state, which must have been very burdensome indeed. Through the eyes of Ssu-ling, among the last of a noble Tartar line, I saw the unparalleled splendor of the Tartar city.

There is not another spot in the world like Peking, or the Northern Citadel, to distinguish it from Nanking, which in times past was the capital of the south. It is indeed a

Tartar city, for on Peking the northern conquerors, the Celts of the Middle Kingdom, lavished their wealth and pride and all the splendid imagery of their creative imaginations. The result is a gem as pure and serene as the Taj Mahal.

Had the Tartars continued in power, China would never have changed to a republican form of government. And there are those, foreign as well as native, who deprecate this change. For sheer magnificence has its own ends. Dress suits and high top hats do not alter the hearts of men, but how they affect the appearance!

Gone are the days of the ceremonial robe, the peacock plumes, and the splendid raiment of the courtiers. But Peking remains, and so long as the yellow roofs of the Forbidden City flare against the unresisting blue of the sky, the traveler will not be at a loss to reconstruct the pageantry of a race unfortunately dead. The huge gray walls with their towering templed gates meagerly herald the beauty they seclude. But only pass within, mount to a vantage point, and see the gently sloping roofs billowing away like an imprisoned saffron sea. The yellow tiles are intermittently broken with green, and both are only accentuated by the common gray of the lesser buildings which

cluster around the palaces and temples as if their hearts' blood were drawn from them.

Great avenues, like animated rivers of color, flow from wall to wall. They seethe with humanity, with a turbulent pagan throng. I looked down on them, detached, as if from another world. They were not a part of me, yet I felt myself caught up by their irresistible glamor; for here was man ebullient with emotion, hiding nothing, and yet concealing all.

It was rumored that the Empress Dowager, that remarkable Elizabethan who rose from obscurity to match her wits with those of the Western world, had constructed an underground passageway from her palace to the home of a foreign diplomat with whom she was wont to pass her time as she would. It was even whispered that an accomplished ambassador requested his withdrawal because the redoubtable empress impoverished him at the royal game of poker. It is a pity indeed that the great woman did not leave behind her a diary, for it would have made a volume of mighty reading. Though it were unwise to let it go into the hands of the young, who might thereby be tempted to emulate their queen.

Until recently the Forbidden City was all

that the name implies. Even now there is a nook and corner of it which must be forever inaccessible to the world. Here the remnants of the royal family dwell; the little Emperor for whom various attempts at restoration have been made; his uncle and a host of retainers who vainly wait and pray for an imperial resurrection. A handful of eunuchs still poke their beardless cheeks through the princesses' curtained windows. But the Forbidden City is dead, and dead is the race that might have restored it to life.

The Western Hills, where Ssu-ling had her home, are some seventeen miles from the walls of the Tartar city. Beyond them lies Mongolia and the Desert of Gobi, that Sahara of Asia which with the aid of early winter winds increases the soil of provinces a thousand miles to the south. Ssu-ling's home was a little Italian villa-like affair overlooking the lotus lake. Far off in the distance a pagoda penciled itself on the sky. The multicolored roofs of the summer palaces shimmered against the green of the pines and the hemlocks. In the early days of the empire it must have been a veritable fairyland. For even now, with no quaint processions moving across the plain, it had an atmosphere distinctly unique.

At night, with the red moon dissolving into

yellow over the tops of the hills, there was not a more bewitching spot this side of Paradise. In the daytime Ssu-ling piloted me about, discovering loves long dead, and burning my ears with the romances of kings. I saw the marble boat, that most ingenious contrivance, which is supposedly built of solid stone and for aught I could discover is built of solid stone. It is pure white and floats gently at its mooring. Once it bore the Emperor around the lake. Will it never glide over the placid waters again? Not unless an Emperor takes his ease on the alabaster throne.

One day we journeyed back to visit the Temple of Heaven. What the Taj Mahal is to Agra, the T'ien T'an is to the Tartar city. It is still and undoubtedly forever will be a mystery whence came these precious stones. For the altar is built of spotless marble. Thither the emperor yearly repaired to worship the source of his power. As a token of royal humility he climbed the balustraded steps with unshod feet. And to this day a Westerner can no better show the fineness of his soul than by entering the temple with unsandaled silence. That Chinese cosmogonists failed to construct a theological heaven should in no wise cast a slur on the depth of their creative imaginations. Being of a people eminently

TEMPLE OF HEAVEN APPROACH

THE MARBLE BOAT

practical they saw no need to exercise their faneies merely for fancy's sake. What they dreamed, they realized. Life was mostly ugly. If there were a heaven it must needs be brought to earth. And in this instance heaven and the fullness thereof is Peking and its environs. The T'ien T'an against a purple sky! No wonder Orient spells Imagery!

CHAPTER IX

Though I did not know it at the time, I was never to see Ssu-ling again. Her Hsi Kung left her, pressing tenderly his own hands, while she pressed hers. For this is the fashion in China. I went back to my offices in the Tientsin Chinese city, and for an unconscionably long time I could see nothing but the purple rim of the Western Hills with the roofs of the palaces glimmering a little way beneath. The Tung Ma Lu, or Eastern Road, served only to accentuate the beautiful memory that was to be forever mine.

In China time flies with a vengeance. If the romantic, the strangely beautiful, was not always happening, like the tales in an endless storybook, there was much else to captivate my fancy.

One morning I was standing beside my window, looking into the bustling street. No object in particular claimed my attention until I noticed a group, that grew with the moments, surrounding a large earthen jar. To call this jar simply large is barely doing it justice. It

was of the sort in which the thief was concealed, in the story of the Forty Robbers. The man who had proprietorship over it held a ladle in one hand. With this he dipped a quantity of glasses full of a blackish viscous liquid that, even from my second-story window, seemed singularly alive. The crowd multiplied exceedingly. Dirty yellow hands were outstretched for the coveted drink with as much noisy clamorousness as other hands were once outstretched for water from that memorable Black Hole.

I saw the black viscous liquid rapidly receding to the bottom of the jar. Still the crowd surged in ever increasing numbers. I must act quickly. No doubt this was some famed life-giving nectar from a templed spring in Tibet. I went precipitately down and elbowed my way to the very edge of the cavernous dish. No sooner had I looked than I rubbed my eyes to make sure that I was not dreaming. I was wide awake. The native who held out to me a brimming glass of the stuff was no apparition. I paid him two coppers for the drink and then I poured it carefully into a saucer on his stand.

Could I believe my senses? Innumerable little tadpoles wriggled over the white glazed surface. If a tadpole is born, then these

certainly were infants. It was the most atrocious instance of robbing the cradle I have yet uncovered. But the natives did not look at the matter in just that light. There was nothing immoral about it to them, though in my opinion they were treating their stomachs with dissolute abandonment.

I can only imagine the good they thought they were doing themselves. As ticklers of the abdominal palate I can conceive of nothing more efficacious than tadpoles, little ones. As stimulants to the digestive organs they are, for all I know, quite without parallel. But until they closed their little eyes in death I can't, for the life of me, understand how any mortal man, Pagan or Christian, could tolerate, even for an instant, a half hundred of them chasing their tails around his solar plexus. Dead, they might conceivably be palatable sea food. Alive, they must be torture, or else Nirvana. Perhaps they function so rapidly that the total resultant sensation is like reclining on a billowy couch with breezes blowing from an emerald sea.

I have eaten hashish, that delectable Persian condiment. I have felt the world and my material sense slough off me like dead skin. I have experienced utter detachment of body and soul, so that the latter ascended in a purple

PORCELAIN PAILOW NEAR THE SUMMER PALACE

LOOKING TOWARD PEKING FROM THE WESTERN HILLS

mist and regarded the former with a genuine sympathy, not altogether tearless. But I have yet to quench my thirst with tadpoles.

That evening, when I went home, I asked L'Americain, my native servant whom a French colleague so-named because he resembled Chingachgook, what he thought of the native superstitions. I related the incident of the tadpoles, solely to get his reaction to it. L'Americain reacted thuswise.

"I could never afford the drink myself, but I remember hearing my grandmother say it was looked favorably on by the emperors."

"But don't you know why it is looked favorably on?" I questioned.

"Well, it's an old custom that has never done anyone harm, and it may have done good. I don't know."

"Why is it that I never happened on this drink before?"

"Because it is so precious. I can buy a gallon of water for a copper, while this costs that much for a glass. It's not reasonable. I'm a poor man."

"But if you were rich you would drink the stuff and be no better for it," I countered a trifle sarcastically.

"The doctors have not yet determined the

good of these things," my servant answered unperturbed.

Spinny, the venerable nurse of English friends of mine, herself the mother of some seventeen children, maintained that the only cure for a toothache was to put a toad in the mouth and keep it there till it died. On a detailed inquiry I learned that the pain in the tooth entered the toad and annoyed it so much that it gave up the ghost. One day Spinny had a toothache. The wife of my English friend endeavored to have her treated by a foreign dentist; but all to no avail. Spinny resorted to her own devices. Did she put a toad in her mouth and did it die? She would not indulge our curiosities thus far. I only know that she suffered excruciating agonies for two or three days when the tooth, manifestly harassed to the breaking point by the toad, dropped out, and there the matter lay.

Spinny's sole justification for this practice was an anecdote told her by her mother of a princess in the dark ages who was cured of toothache in this striking manner. This was sufficient. It had happened once. It might happen again. Who knows?

One day, while walking in the narrow streets of the older native city, I saw a man lying prone on his face, his back bared to the waist,

and another fellow, manifestly a doctor, hovering over him. As the spectacle was quite public I had no hesitancy in standing by. The man was evidently ailing; he may have overeaten the night before and become alarmed at his sudden corpulency. So the doctor told him to lie down. When I arrived on the scene the quack, for he did not deserve a better name, had taken a small knife and was cutting little crosses up and down either side of the patient's spine. The crosses were of the sort we all recall so vividly from the days of vaccination.

When the blood was flowing freely the quack shook a green powdered stuff, made of dried herbs and cheap incense, over the bruised portions of the skin. Then he applied a match to each little pile. The incense flared up with green flames. The prostrate wretch writhed like a man undergoing torture; whereat the quack applied plasters of an unsanitary looking nature. This was the end of the treatment.

It all reminded me of the ancient saw, it takes a devil to catch a devil; for manifestly this is what the operation amounted to. In China everything active is a devil. The one exception to this is woman, and according to Chinese philosophy she is passive. The other exception is man. He is active, but he is not a

devil. Wherever pain exists, it is necessary that a counterbalancing pain be brought to bear. It is unthinkable that little pills, unless they contain a narcotic, can palliate, not to mention driving away, big hurts. It is a child's conception of science, and in these departments of knowledge the Chinese are, like children, vastly amusing.

One evening I heard the fire bells clanging down the street. I looked out and saw a little shack, a blacksmith's shop, burning merrily only a hundred yards away. I ran down in time to see a procession of professional fire fighters form a circle round the doomed building and commence beating copper gongs suspended from their necks. In due time a terrible racket was evoked. But as the tones of the gong sounded louder, the flames went higher, and the end of it you can see for yourselves. I suppose the firemen thought their duty done if they frightened the devil away from adjacent buildings. There happened to be no wind that night. So the devil did not become rampant. Even if he had become rampant and razed half the city, the populace would not have blamed their priests. Some one had done a great wrong, and the fire devil simply would not hear to being frightened away.

Devils are singularly persistent at times, but they are not nearly so formidable as they look. The bulk of the Chinese are on quite intimate terms with them. In fact, they have given so much of their time to hobnobbing with devils that they have failed to meet their creator. If this has made them pagan, it has also made them vital. It was not so long ago that Christians gave considerable attention to the devil, Milton not excepted. But now we have lost him, and there seems to be small likelihood of getting him back. The Chinese have an advantage over us here. They could lose a hundred devils and still have a hundred more. And personifying evils is much safer than abstracting them. If you abstract them you are liable to draw all the evil out of them, and this is a risky matter. The Chinese fear their devils. We don't even fear our God.

Probably no superstition ever got a securer hold on the imaginations of the people than the Boxer one. In Moukden I heard my first tales of the Boxers, or the Society of the Righteous Fists. I was conversing one afternoon with the head of the school for blind girls, the one to which I committed my find near the Temple of Fertility. This gentleman told me of the days when all suspected Christian converts were approached by soldiers armed

with swords. A tiny slip of white paper with the characters signifying Yeh-su, Jesus, written thereon was thrust into the suspected one's hands. He was told to spit upon it and trample it under foot. Failing this, he was cut down on the spot. And it was remarkable, according to this gentleman, how many were cut down. It only served to magnify the already great admiration I entertained for them. A martyr must always be a noble being, even though we pity him.

Other missionaries told me of riding off in the night, their children clutching their necks, and of looking back to see their homes in flames. The Boxers had conceived the idea that the foreigner was a devil and an excessively personal one, not at all abstract. They complimented him with the name of Foreign Devil, and to this day the children bawl it at you from the by-streets. Evidently the natives tired of beating gongs at the air. The lust for blood had been slumbering in their veins ever since the Manchus sheathed their swords over the Tartar throne. Here was an object for venom. But with true celestial wiliness the Chinese invoked the aid of the spirits temporarily abandoned. The master stroke was distinctly a pagan one.

The Boxers believed that the bullets from

MONUMENT TO BOXER VICTIMS, RUSSIAN PARK, TIENTSIN

their adversaries' rifles were ineffective against them. And so long as this belief prevailed the work went merrily on. It is recounted that a particularly astute leader demonstrated each day that all true believers were invulnerable. He simply removed the slugs from a number of cartridges, stood the selected apostles against a wall a little way off, and fired at them in rapid succession. The simple folk, who were wont to associate death at the hands of a foreigner with a very loud noise, were thus deluded into thinking they really were immune. Thousands flocked to the banner of murder and pillage which culminated in the sieges of Peking and Tientsin.

An English lady who was a girl of fifteen in those memorable summer days of 1900 told me how she stood on the roof of her home and watched the Boxers dancing outside the foreign soldiers' entrenchments. There was so little ammunition left that the soldiers dared not waste a shot. They were reserving everything for the final rush. In the meantime the Boxers worked themselves into a stupendous frenzy. The occasional death of one of their number in no wise lessened their faith in the cause. This woman remembers how with other girls, equally reckless, she ventured into the native city. Hearing the

noise of riding soldiers she dodged into a tumbled hut. She was terror-stricken. She ran into something that swung away from her and then swung back again, nearly knocking her down. When she recovered her senses she saw a dead man hanging there with a horrible grin on his yellow face. No doubt a Christian convert, or perhaps a traitor. She did not know. She only remembers turning into the open again and fleeing back to her own house. But to this day, so she told me, the face of that dead man haunts her. She sees him in her dreams.

Then came that never-to-be-forgotten day when the women and children were assembled in the Gordon Hall, which is the heart of the British concession, and the men took up the last few rounds of ammunition to await the rush that momently was expected. In one sense it was harder for the men than for the women. As for the children, they enjoyed every moment of it, for they had never expected to experience in reality the pages of Cooper. But there was one thing the women never knew until the danger was past.

The Englishmen had gotten together and decreed that when all hope was past they would put their dear ones out of harm's way with their own tender hands. To make it

easier, each man was assigned somebody else's family. For never would Englishmen allow the ones they loved to fall into the power of the fanatic Boxers. It was a terrible resolve for men to have to make. But fortunately it was not carried out. A rider came through to Taku and another sun saw troops marching into the city. Thus were the foreigners spared a terrible death, for the cruelty of fanaticism knows no bounds. The end of summer witnessed the collapse of the Boxer movement, a movement which never will have a rebirth. For China is fast putting away her devils, an example set her by the western world. Who will give her a God?

CHAPTER X

From Tientsin it was only an overnight's journey into the hinterland. On occasional holidays, and others, I slipped out of the teeming bustle of the Chinese city and ran down by night to Shanhaikwan, where the sea, the hills, and the great wall come together. Here it is that the Manchus commenced their conquest of the Middle Kingdom. The great wall, a penciled streak of gray pouring down from the peaks of the farther hills to bury itself in the sea, was supposed to be an impassable barrier. But the hardy Manchus constructed a handful of ships and simply sailed around, landing on the Chinese side. To-day, the obvious antiquity of the landscape is the chiefest charm of the place, if one except the North Hotel, where the opium smugglers from Siberia congregate.

I always stayed at the North Hotel, where great bearded Russians with Japanese wives, and Amazon-like women with no husbands, but plenty of lovers, seemed to while their time away. At ten in the morning they came in their outlandish kimonos and Japanese slippers

into the main salon, which had a bar in one corner and a dining table in another, with card tables and couches strewn between. They were a motley crowd. But it needed only a glass of grenadine and soda to make me one of them.

There was the Countess Korisoff, a ripened woman of thirty-eight years who once must have been beautiful. Even now she would have looked handsome had she been tidy. She was a superb blond. When she moved about it was with a sort of conscious strength, as if she knew she could have given birth to a race of supermen but disdained anyone short of a god as their father. She spoke in a rich mellow voice that caused the nondescripts at the tables to drop their cards from their hands when she entered the room. And when she reclined on her couch and began playing La Cloche Solitaire on a little lacquer table she had commandeered for that purpose, the rest of the company threw up their games in despair, and clustered around and over her, passing remarks that would have caused an average mortal to faint, but whose only apparent effect on the Countess Korisoff was seen in the parting of her lips to smile as the pack in her jeweled hands grew smaller and ever smaller.

There was also Nikko-san, the Japanese mistress of an intelligent Greek, who smiled so sweetly on me in the morning when I came in to breakfast. I sat at table with her while she read my hands. She spoke pretty, broken English which she had learned, no doubt, as a singing girl before this Greek offered her a permanent attachment. Plentiful jet-black hair fell by its own weight to her shoulders. She wore it parted in the middle, which is not at all the Japanese custom. But I liked it best that way, for it gave her a look decidedly French and so enhanced her attractiveness.

Because of her beauty the Greek was jealous of her and often cast wicked glances in my direction. But the Countess Korisoff, who could read men like open books, became my constant benefactress in this matter. So long as the Greek merely glanced in our direction we were safe. But when he lifted his head high from his shoulders, and nearly closed his eyes, and gripped the edges of the table with his wiry narcotic fingers, the countess always called out, "*Attention, mes chers.*"

The company thought this a signal to gather around her couch, but I knew, by previous arrangement, that it was intended for ourselves, for Nikko-san and me. I can still hear that vibrant voice, like a contralto's taking her

RAILWAY PIERCING THE GREAT WALL AT SHANHAIKWAN

pitch, "*Attention, mes chers,*" whenever I meet with danger. The Greek took Nikko-san away one night, and for the rest of my stay I had to be content with a Russian ex-officer, who told me tales of the running.

Poor Mavromaras, the proprietor of the North Hotel, had seen better days too. He had vision, but fate abused him cruelly. When it became evident that the decisive battle of the Russo-Japanese War would be fought at Moukden, Mavromaras put his entire fortune, two hundred thousand roubles (which was a fortune in those days), into champagne, and secreted it in a small village bordering the battle field. It was his idea, as it was the whole world's, that Russia would be victorious. But the Japanese won, and a marauding band discovered the liquid hoard. The result was a riotous debauch, in which two hundred thousand roubles worth of honeyed nectar went down the throats of those who had never tasted it before. Mavromaras went back to Shanhaikwan, a broken man. But the North Hotel attests to his recuperative ability, and by the time the next battle of Moukden is fought, he may be ready to try the wheel again.

"What percentage of opium do we get?" I asked Kochalski, the Russian ex-officer, one evening after the others had retired. By

"we" I meant the Chinese customs administration of which I was an executive official.

He fingered his yellow mustache an unconscionable while before he ventured to answer. Looking at me with nearly emotionless cold blue eyes he seemed to be piercing the secret places of my soul. Finally, as if satisfied that I had no intention of spying, he said offhandedly, "Oh, maybe one tenth, maybe less."

"You mean," I returned, "that nine tenths of the stuff goes through!"

"Precisely." And then he added, with a humorous glint to his eyes, "Did you really believe your administration more successful?"

"That doesn't matter to me," I said. "My interest in the work is not a moral one. Do you mind telling me some of the ways it goes through?"

"Probing professional secrets?" Kochalski queried.

"On my honor," I commenced, but he cut me short.

"Well, to tell you the truth, we shouldn't get a half of it through, weren't the Chinese so amenable."

"A case of money talking, I suppose."

"Precisely. In this instance money is more loquacious than women."

"But the method," I interposed. I was sleepy. Kochalski was Siberia bound in the morning.

"Always a simple one," he replied. "The bulk of it doesn't come this way at all. We operate this line chiefly as a ruse. Do you happen to know the treaty rights on Indian cotton?"

"What has cotton to do with the drug?" I questioned blankly.

"Just this. India cotton, by treaty stipulation, goes into Shanghai baled. Which means that it is exempt from examination. Of course, one of your officers can run a steel probe into a bale. I must correct my grammar. He may run it in, if he can. Did you ever attempt to run a probe into a bale of India machine-pressed cotton?"

I wagged my head in negation.

"Well, it can't be done," he said. "So we simply introduce a quantity of the stuff into each bale. Did it never strike you as odd that so much Japanese cotton is transshipped to India, re-baled there, and finally consigned to a treaty port? Every one of those bales carries opium or worse. But that is the big method. The lesser ones are more amusing."

"If you are not too tired, go on," I intercalated.

"Hardly a coal tender goes through but what contains, buried far beneath the coal, a bit of coagulated poppy juice. We give the engineer and stoker a number of pieces of silver. Nature does the rest; human nature, I mean. Why are so many Japanese women traveling up and down the line? Because they have such a gorgeous sufficiency of hair. Being accustomed to carry burdens on their crowns, a mere matter of a few ounces of the drug is easily met. Soldiers' rifles have many advantages. The muzzles can be plugged and so cut off the smell. What is your English word for smelly?"

"Pungent," I replied.

"Well, opium is exceedingly pungent. Give me a windless night and a pound of opium within a quarter mile and it's mine. Of course there are a hundred ways of concealing the stuff. You can think of most of them yourself. But the great lubricant of the trade is silver, much fine silver. Now if you were an ordinary officer, instead of an official, I might make you an offer."

"Make it, anyway," I suggested.

"Would twenty thousand a year strike you as being small?"

"It would keep me in cigarettes for a millennium," I countered jestingly.

"We won't wait that long. Have one now." He extended towards me a black damascene case with a gold dragon engraved thereon, and I selected a gold-tipped Russian smoke that made my senses swim before I lighted it. When I recovered them Kochalski was gone. So I smuggled myself to sleep.

Had the opium trade ever been one half so bad as the missionaries picture it, China would have long since been lulled to a dreamless sleep. By the conscious reformer the slightest evil is magnified until it becomes an all-embracing sin. So far as I have been able to determine, opium has never had the effect on China that beer has had on the Germans, or absinthe on the French, not to mention whisky, which is now openly prohibited, on the United States. I always had a desire to draw on an opium pipe. It is one of the few pleasures I have never had, and perhaps when I go to my last coach I will call for the heart of a poppy which is said to bring heaven to earth.

An eminent member of the Republican cabinet one day journeyed toward the south. No one thought anything of this. In China cabinet ministers are constantly traveling. In fact, they do little else. But when this particular statesman reached Shanghai, his movements, or rather the accessories to them, be-

came, so to speak, public property. His luggage amounted to some thirty pieces. And twenty-two of them were packed as snugly with raw opium as if they had been made expressly for the drug. As the cabinet convened rather suddenly that week, this statesman hurried back to sit with others as scoundrelly as he. If those high up act in this wise, what can be expected of the poor devils who live by the trade? Which reminds me of the manner editorials read in our modern papers. Pagan China and Christian America, which is to be interpreted, The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea.

One clause of a treaty respecting the seizure of opium reads that whenever a quantity of drug is seized, the container and all adjacent articles thereto shall be confiscated with it. This gives rise to some delicate situations. One morning I was sitting in my office speculating as to which of a number of ponies was most likely to win the Champions Sweep when I heard a timid knock on the door. I took my feet off the desk, rustled my sack coat onto my shoulders, and said in a responsible voice, "Come in." I was, to say the least, thoroughly unprepared for the sight that met my eyes.

A handsome slip of a girl, wearing something that resembled an antiquated evening dress, crossed the threshold dragging after her a

youngish man in a suit of yellow pyjamas. He wore an astrakhan hat and carried a fur-lined coat on his arm. It was the middle of July. The man could not speak a word of English or Chinese or French or German or Latin. So I turned to the woman for an explanation. She spoke excessively broken English, interspersed with Russian swear-words.

Little by little the story came out. The train by which they had arrived was the early one. They had been awakened just outside the city and searched. Both of them were in bed at the time. The customs officer uncovered some twenty pounds of morphine in their bags, and, remembering the words of the treaty, he had confiscated everything in sight, the bulk of which was clothes,—shimmering lingerie, stiff cavalry boots, coarse woolens, and no end of little things. The result was indeed lamentable. The girl and the youngish man were put to the necessity of coming to me just as they were. It is fortunate the night had been cool. Otherwise I might have seen the second Garden of Eden enacted before my eyes.

The girl pleaded for their clothing. Tears were in her eyes and I would have accommodated her in any possibly way, but treaties are not made by Englishmen to be broken. The

best that I could do was to offer to write a letter to her consul (they both were Russians) and hope that the weather would continue mild. The man gesticulated wildly when she told him how powerless I was. But the girl gave me a tremulous smile through her tears and dragged her impassioned companion into the lobby. That night I started to learn the Russian language.

Late one afternoon in August of 1918 a Hsun-pu, or revenue soldier, came into my office with his mouth all shot away. The bullet must have been a large one, for it had sheared off his teeth as if they had been so much wool. He babbled to me unintelligibly through his bleeding lips what he deemed a pitiful story. A Chinese writer, a particularly astute man, gave me the gist of the tale.

The Hsun-pu knew his duty and did it, but at the cost of his teeth. A big fat Chinese general, than whom nothing is bigger or fatter, had contended that, being a general and very much removed from common men, he was not subject to search in the usual way. The Hsun-pu, whose nostrils were untowardly sensitive, became rightly aggressive. I can picture the big fat general sitting there with his boots off and his feet curled under him like a josh. No doubt his breast was gleaming with medals.

A RIVER PIRATE AT HOME

Some of his nails were long so that when he brushed his face it was with the heel of his hand. Then he would scratch his close-cropped head and blink with swinish contentment.

But the Hsun-pu was obdurate, and in the end the general had drawn his Mauser and taken a pot-shot at my Hsun-pu's head. It was quite a random shot, merely raking the poor fellow's teeth. The general was forcibly pacified by foreign officers and there the incident ended. My Hsun-pu was not like Spinny, who put toads in her mouth. He submitted to being tortured by an American dentist, and at the end of the month came in to show me two rows of false gleaming ivories.

But if this Hsun-pu was a heroic fellow and richly deserving of the thirty cents' increase in his weekly pay, I had another who played me utterly false. I had suspicions of him, so one night I ordered a raid on his quarters. The result was truly astounding. Besides bringing to light three huge chests of gold and silver ornaments, jade earrings, and American twenty dollar gold eagles which the natives especially prize, we uncovered beneath a maze of costly silks two little girls from Ningpo. The Ningpo girls are famous for their beauty, and my Hsun-pu, whatever his other faults, was a connoisseur in women. The little things were

not so frightened as they seemed. They told me quite openly that they had been bought for eighty silver dollars. Since there is a Customs Administration in Ningpo, we ordered their parents to buy them back again. This was hard on the parents and harder on the girls, for no doubt they were severely beaten and sold again for a price much lower than eighty silver dollars, which, after all, is a lot of money in China.

The Hsun-pu was merely discharged. The manner in which he had acquired his fortune amounting to some seventy thousand taels is not uninteresting. With others he had watched native smugglers go into shops and buy their modicums of drug. When they came out again they were seized, their purchases, usually opium, taken forcibly from them in the name of the law and turned over to my Hsun-pu, who himself had a ready market for the stuff. It was a beautiful game, without a flaw in it but over-prosperity. The Ningpo girls had displayed too many golden trinkets, some one had babbled, and it came to my ears. The big officials in Peking acquire fortunes in a like manner, but, as in our own country, it is always safer to abscond with a million than with a loaf of bread.

I had early impressed it on my chief outdoor

officer that he was to apprise me whenever a river raid was planned. So it was with a quite agreeable thrill that I heard him say a large quantity of drug was expected on a junk that evening. Ordinarily a junk is not searched till it passes a barrier, but in this case special information had been given and a dozen men's veins were a-tingle. Quite sizable rewards were made for seizures. It was the only legitimate way the men had of augmenting their salaries.

It was one of those starry moonless nights when the city was asleep and I could hear the bells of the hawkers tinkling far over the countryside. We took a sampan, or small boat, and skirted the crumbling bank for upwards of two miles. There were a thousand other craft on the river so no one gave us particular attention. We all wore Chinese long coats and soft hats, the raggeder the better. Every man of us was watching for a junk displaying a yellow light on her bow. An adventurous Hsun-pu had marked our prey. Those aboard were delightfully unaware of the imminence of the law.

Junk after junk we passed, and always we peered for the sign of a yellow light. One native expressed the opinion that the light had gone out. The current, he said, should have borne the junk down river long before this.

His argument struck me as being so likely that I turned to see who he was. A suppressed "Ai-yah" was wafted gently to my ears. I turned at once, and there, looming out of the lower darkness like a giant of night, rested a huge junk with a little yellow light gleaming just under her bow. She was at anchor. Her crew were probably below, completing arrangements for hauling the booty ashore.

We drifted quietly to the stern, but, try as we would, we could not prevent our sampan striking the hull with a grating noise. Quick as a flash naked feet paddled to the side, a peering yellow face was thrust downward into the darkness, and a hoarse voice called in a whisper "*Shui?*" One of the Hsun-pu answered, "It is us. We have lost our oar. Get us another one quick." The ruse worked. The naked feet paddled toward the bow. It was our chance.

As one man we clambered noiselessly over the side and hid ourselves in the shadows on the deck. A big Hsun-pu awaited the return of the native with the oar. He came dragging his burden, his head bent down. With one hand clapped over his mouth and the other pressed at the nape of the smuggler's neck, the Hsun-pu picked him bodily from the deck and set him before me.

"Hold him until we get safely below," I whispered in Chinese. "Then drop him in the river."

I drew my pistol and led the men below. There was really little danger except from knives. The odors from the hold were appalling. It seemed impossible that humans should exist in such a place.

From a near by corner came the sound of clinking silver. I looked penetratingly in that direction until I could barely make out a light glowing duskily through a sort of burlap wall. In one moment we had surrounded the musty curtains. In another we thrust them aside.

Prone on the floor were three immense coffins, over which six or seven nearly naked men were laboring under the orders of one only a shade more clothed than they. The men were binding the coffins round and round with a kind of oiled silk. They might have been so many Egyptian undertakers sheathing mummies. At sight of us they leaped back against the beams, their black eyes quivering with fear that fast turned to hatred. Their chief stood stolidly without a smile.

"*Yao shen mo?*" he muttered finally. "What do you want?"

"Up to the old game, eh," returned my

chief outdoor officer, who seemed to recognize the man.

"Old game; what old game?" asked the wily native.

"Come on now," said my chief, "open up and it will go easy with you."

"Corpses smell," returned the native sneeringly. The half dozen Chinese coolies against the wall leered with delight at this witticism of their leader.

"So they're corpses, are they?" my officer laughed.

For answer the native chief motioned two of his men to open the middle box. The outside ones were already swathed. Sure enough! When the lid was removed nothing more than the shriveled face of a very old man met our eyes. My officer bent his head down and rustled his hands up and down the corpse. He straightened as if satisfied.

"And the others are the same, I suppose," he said, with an affected sincerity.

"*Shih*," replied the native leader. "A boy and an old lady."

"The whole family, eh," quickly returned my chief. "What a coincidence!"

And then he took his six-shooter from his coat pocket. His eyes no longer had a kindly glint in them. "Open them up," he shouted,

and to leave no doubt as to the intent behind his words, he emptied his pistol into the unresisting coffins, but not before I had covered the glowering natives with mine.

"Open them up," my chief repeated threateningly.

The Chinese smuggler shrugged his shoulders despondently and signaled his coolies to comply with my officer's demand.

It was but the work of moments to rip off the filmy silk and pry the lids from their places. The sight that met our eyes was good to see. The odor from eight hundred pounds of raw Persian opium rose to our already jaded nostrils. As one man we involuntarily rushed forward. All except the smuggler. Wrenching my officer's pistol from his hand the wily Chinese dashed into the darkness. I heard six distinct clicks of steel against steel as he scrambled up the ladder. Then, disgusted, he threw the weapon into the hold and splashed over the side for the shore.

It was easy to dispose of the others. They were put to work carrying the two coffins that mattered up to the deck. Had they let them fall, there would have been a number of broken legs, for the coffins were great oaken affairs that could withstand the elements for a hundred years. In the end the poor coolies were

turned over to the local magistrate and probably beaten. The opium was taken down river and put under lock and key until a date was assigned for the burning. And there the matter lay.

The smuggler no doubt is still commandeering corpses for his nefarious trade. Ordinarily the dead are respected. But in China they have a utility all their own.

My French friend, Holstein, an eminent Chinese scholar, loved to recount the early days of his service. The first document that came to his hands, he said, was inscribed with the following words, "Please pass coffin with corpse." Which struck me as being much ado about next to nothing.

CH'IEN MEN GATE, PEKING

IN THE HEART OF THE WESTERN HILLS

CHAPTER XI

Transfer was ever hanging in the air. To-day here, to-morrow there. China was big and vibrant with life. Every locality had a delectable charm of its own. One city was famed for its women, another for its landscape, and yet a third for its food. I had grown to look on the north as my home. I knew it intimately. The western hills, the Manchurian plains, the Mongolian steppes with the Great Wall pulsing twixt earth and heaven, the tortuous yellow rivers and the uneven roads,—all these were more than names to me. They were hearts beating in sympathy with my own.

But China was not yet completely mine. The Devils and the Gods connived at their latest scheme. To begin with it struck me as altogether devilish. But I learned to look on it as a gift from the lesser angels. I was at Peitaiho, the Newport of the north China shore, passing the summer of 1919 with friends. Every hour of it had been heaven-sent. We were a little colony of exiles. The sea, that precious element that ran out to kiss my own

New England shores, lay in front of us becalmed. Over the rim of the distant hills at our backs China glowered. We were glad for this moment of quiet. It was like breathing mountain air.

On the 29th of July, my commissioner, Percy Romilly Walsham, one of the finest English gentlemen I have ever known, whose father, Sir John, was a distinguished British Ambassador to China, intercepted me in the middle of my dreams with the news of my transfer to Mengtsz. Mengtsz! The very edge of the world! For Mengtsz was a couple of thousand miles to the south, not far from Burma, and near the heart of the Tonkinese jungle-land. Mengtsz (pronounced as it is spelled) meant the tropics. The north had been beautiful but nature was not luxuriant there. She did not spill over like a full goblet of rich red wine. But Mengtsz! I began to dream and my dream fell short of true.

I coasted down to Hongkong, that British paradise of the sea, where the twinkling lights on the Peak at evening shine like the lower stars. At Hongkong I boarded the *André Lébon*, one of the big Messagerie Maritime liners, that has had the distinction of turning turtle and being righted again. Speedily we cut our way towards the Hainan Sea, a

diminutive ocean that lies with treacherous invitingness between South China and Singapore. In itself the Hainan Sea hardly deserves such an unworthy adjective. But the creatures that it harbors are the most treacherous ones of the deep. For the Hainan Sea is infested with sharks, huge sportive fellows that race along with the ship with all the froliesomeness of dolphins. Let merely a loaf of bread be cast on the waves, and there will ensue an angry rush that will cause the beholder to tremble. Once I saw such a rush when two sharks somehow inadvertently bit into each other. Their own blood spelled their doom. For their fellows, enraged by the reddened waters, rushed on them with bristling mouths. I have seen Manchurian dogs act in a similar manner when one of their number went down.

In the center of the Hainan Sea there is a sand bar, and on the sand bar rests the rusting hull of a little tramp. I have seen such sights in profusion along the Florida coast. But this one has a history. In the winter of 1917 a batch of some sixty coolies was being transferred from Hongkong to the Straits Settlements. They must have been huddled together like cattle, for the tramp was not much larger than a tugboat. In a rolling sea she grounded off the bar and the heat from

the sun set fire to her bunkers. The warmth becoming unbearable, the coolies flung themselves into the sea and made for the sand bar, only a hundred yards away. The water was barely over their heads. The majority of them soon were wading through the long swells of the surf. But only seventeen reached the bar. The sharks made merry havoc with the others. I watched the forsaken tramp until it melted into the early glow of evening. It charmed me as a snake charms a bird. Then I turned shudderingly below.

That evening we congregated in the smoking room of the *André Lébon*. There were a Boer from Johannesburg, an Englishman from Hongkong, an American rice merchant from San Francisco, and a New Englander. The talk, when it had done with women, drifted on to books. The Englishman, it seems, had made a find. The Boer wanted something to read. So the Englishman came to the rescue.

"Try 'Treasure Island,'" he said. "It's a new book, published by Kelly and Walsh of Shanghai. It's recent and it's interesting. I bought it to read on the trip."

"'Treasure Island,'" returned the Boer, in a reminiscent sort of voice.

"Yes, that's it, 'Treasure Island,'" affirmed the Englishman.

"But my mother read me 'Treasure Island' thirty years ago."

"Here's a lark," laughed the Briton. "Boys shall we put him to bed? Perceival, you've been nursing the bottle alone. It's not fair. I thought we'd agreed to get drunk together."

"Laugh, laugh!" returned the exasperated South African colonist, "but I tell you my mother read me 'Treasure Island' with me in her lap."

"What a big baby!" interpolated the smiling Briton. "Wait! I'll get the book."

In a moment he was back and displaying with sublime confidence the imprint, 1917.

"There," he said. "Do you want anything more?"

"But, man," returned the Boer, whom I was kicking desperately under the table, "this is merely a reprint. The old edition's run out, so they set up a new one."

"No, I tell you it's a new book," insisted the Briton, who by this time was himself beginning to be annoyed. And then he demanded quickly, as if from inspiration, "Who's king these days, anyhow?"

"Why, George!" replied the Boer with unperturbed perplexity.

"Then look here," said the Englishman,

with an air of finality. He had opened "Treasure Island" to chapter three, The Black Spot, and indicated what he wished the Boer to notice with his fingers. "Read those words," the Briton said.

"And God bless King George," the Boer read aloud.

"Well," said the Briton, wagging his head vindictively, "doesn't that prove 'Treasure Island's a modern book?"

Some one, maybe it was I, tipped over a tall brown glass at the critical moment, so the Boer forgot to answer. No doubt, when he thinks of it, he still puckers his shaggy brows and wishes his dear old Dutch mother were alive to vindicate his memory.

Later in the evening it devolved that Bernard Shaw had gone down on the *Titanic*. The Boer laid a thousand pounds that he hadn't. The Englishman countered weakly. And as the Boer looked as though he had a thousand pounds and the Briton did not appear to have any we decided to break up the party. On the morrow I would have need of much energy. For the jungle was at hand.

Early the following morning the great ship was alive with nearly naked little men who had come off from the shore in their funny boats to help discharge the cargo. When I

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLES

IN THE BAIE D'ALONG

got up the *André Lébon* was lying at anchor in the most beautiful stretch of water in the world. The surface of the sea was heavy like mercury, and of a color like the purest jade. Not a ripple was to be seen, and the ocean impressed itself on me like an immense tepid bath.

On every side black pillar-like domes rose out of the bay much as seals raise themselves from their rocks. They stretched interminably one behind the other, until all distinct outlines were lost in the intricate mazes of the Baie d'Along. The Baie d'Along is a veritable catacomb of the sea. Many a venturesome traveler has wandered into its beautiful winding ways never to return. The calcareous domes were covered with a greenish flowerless plant, making a line of them look like a giant hedge with a vista of lesser green below. From a distance they were indeed enchanting. Soon I was to wind my way among them.

Standing at the foot of the grand stairway, watching the passengers clamor round the purser's window, I saw five of the little savages clinging to one another's arms like lost children. Some officer had ordered them to search out a certain box. They had lost their way. Considering the stairs as an avenue of escape from those who were not of their kind, they

flitted up to the landing, where I beheld the funniest sight I have ever seen.

At the head of the landing, where the grand stairway divided, was a huge mirror, resplendent from its early morning polishing. The little men, who had never seen themselves before, were rejoiced to perceive five others coming their way. Their safety, they thought, lay in numbers. So they ran forward, crashing into the gleaming glass which hurled them mockingly back. But the little men were persistent. Could they not plainly see their comrades? They skirted the mirror as one skirts the face of a cliff, their brownish hands flitting over the smooth surface like wings of butterflies. I did not laugh then. I was too keen on seeing the outcome. But I have laughed many times since. Their beady eyes glistened with terror.

Flit, flit, flit went the little brown hands; ten naked feet paddled the oaken floor. For aught I know they might have been flitting there still had not a French officer happened along, a man who was not so humorously inclined as I. He took in the situation at a glance. "*Sacré*," he muttered between clenched teeth as he hit the nearest dwarf with his powerful open hand. The savage went down in a tumbled heap on one of the

side stairways. When he lifted his head from somewhere near the pit of his stomach he saw the stairs mounting before him. With the nimble agility of the ancestors whom he so closely resembled he ran on all fours to the top. The others almost immediately followed him and so were lost from sight.

Within fifteen minutes my trunks were lowered to a launch on which a dozen or more passengers of all sorts and descriptions had already gathered in mute despondency. I did not know, like they, that the ride to Haiphong, which lay on the edge of the jungle, was a matter of some nine hours. The deck of the launch was iron and painted red. There were no seats or even chairs. The black funnel, with the heat waves billowing away from it as ripples follow the splash of a stone, rose up in the center, piercing in its heavenward tilt a very dirty awning several sizes too small for the deck. But I went down with the others, and soon we were steaming up the Baie d'Along.

As we passed near the rocky domelike formations that reared themselves from the water like blunted Cleopatra's Needles I was able to observe them closely. I noticed small brown furry animals about the size of beavers scurrying from top to bottom. I imagine they were some kind of otter, for they could

not have existed entirely on these islets. Had there been any means of recovering the skin I would have shot one out of curiosity's sake. But as it was, I had to leave them scurrying up and down between the little green plants.

Near the heart of the Baie d'Along a diminutive Gibraltar raises its calcine head. The head falls away to jagged shoulders, which in their turn slope to a gentle beach. In the bow of the beach I detected innumerable little crosses that glittered white in the sun. The waters were waveless here and the crosses looked like so many reflections out of the sky. I inquired of the French helmsman as to what they might be. Thirty years before, he said, a party of priests and explorers who had lost their way in the Baie d'Along were captured by savages, taken to the little white beach and eaten. Months later their comrades found their bones glistening as the crosses glistened now. What the savages had left the birds had plucked. So the bones were buried where they lay, a cross for every skull. I counted seventeen of them before an intervening islet shut them from view. Was ever cemetery more ghastly or more romantically beautiful?

The eye soon tires of sweeping expanses of color. The liquid green below, the cobalt

blue above, with the islets fluttering between, only served to lull me to sleep. The deck was scorchingly hot. I had not a place to lay my head. So I snatched a rope from a near-by davit and tied one end of it to the rail. The other I noosed around my neck with a knot that did not slip. Then I lay back with my weight against the rope, all toppled up like a dying crane. In this manner I came to Haiphong.

Bach Tha Buoy, the administration's agent to whom I held a letter, met me at the wharf. He was an enormous man of indifferent nationality. He had a face like a hawk's and hands like talons, the latter rendered unsightly by erysipelas of the joints. We went to his office, a tiny cluttered hole on the outskirts of the town, where he held me fascinated with his talk for upwards of two hours. He knew everyone, everything. He had grown up with the country. For aught he knew he had been born in this very place. But he did not know. Bach Tha Buoy knew about everything but himself. He was what might be termed an objective talker. For this reason I found him delightfully refreshing.

Not far from Haiphong, which lies on the river of that name, is the most interesting jungle-land in creation. Here the notorious

prince T'ai Nam held undisputed sway for more than forty years. He barred every effort of French aggression. So the French despised him and put up a reward of twenty thousand francs for his head. Tonkin is a French protectorate, though nominally still Chinese. It contains the worst climates in China. No wonder the colonial French invariably go to the dogs.

But T'ai Nam! Regiment after regiment was sent into the jungle maze, and regiment after regiment never came out again. Occasionally a half-crazed tortured soldier drifted back to the town after weeks of wandering, to tell a tale that made strong men whimper like children when the colonel's orders were read. The country of T'ai Nam billows away to the sky like an emerald sea. The first regiments went in with colors flying and bands playing as if to a carnival. The fresh look of the jungle beckoned to them with fairy fingers. The feather palms dipped their heads like daisies. The monkeys clattered on before them, leading them to cocoanut groves and honeyed springs. In, in the regiment went, with the wily T'ai Nam always skipping just beyond reach. His camp fires were always burning. But like a child who, tiring of a toy, crushes it with his foot, so, in the end, T'ai

Nam turned back to commence the ghastly slaughter.

I can see the machetes and the curling kukris doing their deadly work. Nothing is more terrible than an invisible foe. What a mockery of God nature had become! The green foliage bristled with death, silent and swift and sure. Rifles were thrown to the ground after the first desperate shots had been fired. There was no way out. The circle did not expand. And when his work was done T'ai Nam skipped merrily away to strike the border again and again, until another regiment was sent as fuel for his pagan lusts.

But T'ai Nam is no more. Like most men of his kind he met an inglorious death at the hands of a Chinese as wily, but not wilier than he. The Chinese was a poor, clever man to whom the twenty thousand francs loomed like a fortune. He went into the jungle and after innumerable hardships attached himself to the prince as a secondary cook. In time, by his assiduity and invention, he became chief of T'ai Nam's culinary household. Seven long years he had waited for his chance,—and death. For T'ai Nam had a misgiving of ill-fortune on the particular morning that his cook decreed he should die. But the prince was a valiant man. He would not belittle

himself before his people. So he invited his cook to eat with him. The poor Chinese could not well refuse. Whatever way he turned, the die was cast. They died together like two hilarious comrades, neither willing to let the other know his innermost fears. For the cook had poisoned the food.

The French Government did rather nobly, I thought. They paid the reward to the wife of the native hero. She did not do as nobly by her spouse as the government did by her. She married a local gaming lord who squandered her fortune in a week. But the name of T'ai Nam, like that of Nero of Roman fame, is imperishable. The evil men do lives after them. No good was interred with T'ai Nam's bones.

Because of the miasmatic pestilential vapors that envelop the Namti valley by night the trains only run in the daytime. When the railway was building natives' lives were snuffed out like so many candles. "For every wooden sleeper there's a human one," were the words of Bach Tha Buoy. And he further told me that a foreign engineer laid down his life for every third of a mile.

"How many miles long is the railway?" I asked him with pertinent emphasis.

"Oh, about four hundred and eighty," he said, shuffling a pile of papers.

THE COUNTRY OF T'AI NAM

A BLOCK OF GOLDEN FRUIT

Those whom the vapors did not greet with their deadly kiss were the victims of tigers and serpents. Bach Tha Buoy himself opened the collar of his shirt for me and displayed a clean white scar that ran from a point just beneath his chin, curving down to his kidney.

"A man-eater?" I questioned with bated breath.

"The old fellow himself," answered Bach Tha Buoy. "He was not after me though. It was the poor devil beyond me he'd selected for his breakfast. Odd how stubborn these dumb brutes are. A tiger will single a man or a bullock from a crowd and bowl over a dozen others to reach his prey. I was in the line of his leap. He merely scratched me as he went past. I had always been interested in my anatomy. I had a good look that time, though I could not help regretting the beast chose the right side of me. Had he chosen the left I might have viewed my heart. What a unique experience to view one's heart!"

"Yes," I assented, "it certainly would be unique."

At Hanoi, the next town above Haiphong, two lordly tigers are held in picturesque captivity. They had not been captured as cubs. They were full-fledged man-eaters when the

final entrapment came. Nor were they mere nondescript wanderers. They were held strictly accountable for their meals. The children (I numbered myself among them) gathered to hear an old lady talk rather ungently at the one who swallowed her son. The lady cursed and the tiger roared, and we merely looked on. It was an auspicious introduction, I thought, to the jungle.

CHAPTER XII

The long jungle train sweated and steamed like an impatient horse. A crowd of natives who should have been securely in their seats were looking at the engine. No doubt they thought it somehow mysteriously endowed with a soul; but whether with that of a devil or of a god they were not reasonably sure. Its blackness with the circle of red round its belly suggested a devil. But, on the other hand, there were all the gold-like ornaments on top; and it breathed vapor instead of fire: it must be a god.

The engine, with its eight little wheels particularly fashioned for climbing, paid no heed to these conjecturings. It showed its utter indifference by suddenly blowing its nostrils at the crowd. The natives scattered like monkeys at the approach of a python. Whether the iron monster was devil or god was of no immediate concern so long as their lives were endangered. A panting sound followed the blowing of the steam, and then the natives knew it was a god. For a god, as everybody

knows, gets easily tired, whereas a devil is tireless. If you don't believe this, only consider the evil in the world. The natives were right. The engine was merely a god, an object to be venerated but not feared.

Without warning the guard blew the three-minute whistle shrilly. The natives tumbled into the coaches, which is a euphemism, like sheep being driven to slaughter. The majority of them had arrived at the station an hour before the train was scheduled to go. But pending the three-minute whistle they had been strolling amiably about the platform, chatting like gentlemen of leisure and attending to everything but their business, which was to see that their baggage was safely aboard and that they had a sufficient amount of food to tide them over the jungle.

Before the guard blew his whistle, a little nickel one that he wore amulet-like about his neck on a silver chain, the platform presented an orderly appearance. It might even have been mistaken for a fashionable promenade. Things move slowly in China until an extraneous force is brought to bear. The guard had not exhausted a fourth of his pulmonary capacity when the station became a riot of noise and movement. An American stock exchange at its frenziedest is dull in comparison.

Natives tore hither and thither, shrieking like madmen. Children were knocked down and beaten under foot. Whole families with third-class tickets were insisting to be let into second-class compartments. It was not sufficient that the guard should deny them this privilege. He had to explain the entire philosophy of railroad procedure, enforce upon their minds the dissimilarity that lay between the hovels they were wont to inhabit and the quite unparalleled comfort afforded by seats that were set in a row. In the end he conducted them, when he had shrieked himself blue in the face, to the exterior of the coach and there pointed out the significance of the number on their pieces of pasteboard and a like numeral printed in gold on the side of the car.

Venders of food and drink lined the train, as if they had been so many relatives bidding their friends farewell. Coppers were thrown out of the frameless apertures serving as windows and food was tossed up in exchange. There were a thousand wild gesticulations and grimaces as buyers and sellers quibbled in terms of fractions of less than a penny. It would seem that the tumult and the shouting could never die, so insistently had it begun. But finally, group by group, the venders

disposed of their wares and shuffled contentedly off, counting their silver.

Family after family trundled into the third-class coaches and settled noisomely down, like ducks that have finally found water. A handful of French soldiers who were relieving some comrades up the line made a place for themselves in the second-class car. They brushed the natives aside like dogs, tumbling them out of their seats as if they had been so much baggage. They were only exercising the right of the conqueror. The natives did not even glower in return for this pleasantry. Nor did the French soldiers glower: they only laughed, as if the entire affair were a joke, which, from their point of view, indubitably was the case. The natives moved on to vacant seats, perhaps to be later tumbled out again by a fresh batch of soldiers.

For a couple of hours we drew steadily into thicker vegetation. At first the palms and rank jungle grasses had been far away, to be seen like oases from a distance. But closer and closer they crept, until I could distinguish the frayed silky network of the lower trunk and the dead brown tips of the bended leaves. The fan palms rose above the feather variety and topping all swayed the lordly coco. When the train took the steeper grades and barely

crept along, I swung from the steps and snatched a block of bananas from the golden ear. Grapefruit shone higher up, like the forbidden fruit, in its insipid green. Interspersing the larger trees, the luxuriant bamboo bristled its needle leaves. At the foot of the trees rank yellow grasses and ferns grew huge sword-like blades. It is underneath the matted tops of these last that the tiger and leopard tread their runs to the springs.

Occasionally we struck an opening and I saw a group of huts with dried banana-leaf roofs nestling among the palms. At one point a farmer was plowing a rice field that lay under water. I could just see the great bullock's head with his glowering eyes, like a moose swimming. The farmer stood in water up to his armpits, steadying the plow. Higher up a group of bullocks grazed off bamboo shoots. Black birds hopped up and down their backs, pecking, pecking, pecking. A child of four years sat between the horns of a cow. When the birds came too close, he shooed them away. His legs were bare and beaks are sharp. He was already somewhat of a man.

At the stations along the way I had an intimate glimpse of the bhang-chewing Annamese. The women wore black flowing trousers and white blouses, and a stiffly coiled cylinder•

like turban. The turbans served to protect their heads from the jars of wine and baskets of fruit they carried in this manner. How incessantly they chewed and spat! Their lips were red and their teeth black, and when they opened their mouths to talk I could think of nothing but Baa, Baa, Blacksheep. The brown earth was spotted with betel-nut spittle. The Anamese blacken their teeth because they think both to preserve and beautify them by this practice. Some of the women were beautiful until they opened their mouths. Then it became Baa, Baa, Blacksheep, until wcariedly I turned away.

The men were similarly clothed, except that in addition to blouses and trousers they wore black slippers. They were more modest than their wives. When I first heard the Chinese language proper I thought it queer. But the Anamese tongue struck me as hopeless gibberish. Presumably it has much in common with southern Chinese, for there are eight distinct spoken languages in China. But Anamese is really difficult to acquire. There are about four hundred words in it, and all of them mean everything. I don't wonder the colonial Frenchman becomes chronically choleric.

Back of the farthest line of feather palms live the savage folk, who, to tell the truth,

are not half so barbarian as a Saturday night crowd in Scollay Square. By pony I have passed as many as twenty tribes in a day; all speaking different languages, and each having an ungovernable propensity for blowing poisoned arrows at the others. Outside of this they gather up the fruit as it drops from the trees, make beaded garments, rope-shoes and rush mats, which they bring into the settlements to barter. I have seen a Miao woman refuse a silver dollar for a pair of shoes because she had set her heart on an empty bottle. Nor did she want the bottle to smell of it. Her nostrils were keen but Columba was not her Saint. The bottle was a prize because it was both reliable and transparent. Glassware did not originate with savages.

But these jungle folk are diffident little people who have inherited from the Middle Kingdom their belief in the foreigner's evil eye. Once I came across a cluster of huts buried deep among the palms. Had not the stallion I was riding scented another I should never have discovered them. Foolishly I looked too long. A child caught sight of me, a girl of some seven years carrying an infant on her back. She bolted into the nearest hut, shrieking like one possessed. I should have gone, but I waited until a crowd formed in the

center of the little village. Certain tales I had heard suddenly coming to mind, I, too, bolted. Later on I rode that way again, and after waiting nearly an hour for some one to appear, I cautiously approached the nearest hut. But there was no need for caution. The village had been abandoned, and all because my evil eye had cast itself among them.

The French Government had reason to know what superstition meant. It appropriated three hundred thousand francs for the building of a road some twelve miles long. The road was to lead off the government highway to a native village in the jungle. It was an arduous task, costing much money and many lives. When the road was within two miles of completion the French engineer thought he might as well confer with the village chiefs. So a delegation went forward to find that the town had moved twenty miles up river. Again the foreigner's evil eye! Mohamet cannot always reach the mountain.

Coming to Mengtsz was in reality getting back to China. Though the jungle had been beautiful, Anam itself did not impress me. Everywhere the hand of the conqueror was evident and the people seemed to be suffering from repression. Life naturally is too easy for the Anamese and they have not yet recovered

A RUIN LEFT BY THE BOXERS

A FARM HOUSE IN THE MENGTSZ VALLEY

from the impact with civilization. Culture for the masses comes high. It takes a long time for races to harden their hands to the plow and the spade. Civilization is a cruel mistress unless she have a lord. Leaving the jungle was like quitting a maelstrom of the vegetable kingdom; arriving in Mengtsz like being pitched headforemost into the animal one again.

Four o'clock in the afternoon of September 6 found me on the rear platform of the little mountain train, shading my eyes as I gazed down and away to Mengtsz. All that day we had been running through luxuriant forests, and steadily climbing. At one point the glittering rails seemed on an embankment over our heads. After the passing of an hour, in which time we had threaded devious tunnels and bridged yawning caverns, I was astounded to look down at the spot we had traversed an hour before. Almost imperceptibly the vegetation thinned until we left it altogether and shot onto the smooth red soil of the plateau which slopes to the plains of Yunnan. The city was barely distinguishable, with the gray walls nearly concealing it. But on the left I noticed a patch of green. White walls intermittently came into view, and the whole was set apart like an emperor's tomb.

The station at which I disembarked to entrain again for Mengtsz is known as Pishihchai, or Flea-Infested Spot. Pishihchai sits like a variegated bowlder on the mountain side. Below the town a lake, like a piece of fallen sky, mirrors clouds. Beyond the lake are mountains looking into Burma. Henri Cloarec was there to meet me. He was to be my colleague in exile. We ran to each other as children will in the dark.

Unlike most Chinese cities, Mengtsz has practically no suburbs. On the west and north sides, to be sure, a handful of earthen huts frowns at the color-seeking eye. But, for the greater part, the city and its pagan throng are swallowed up in the inwardly leaning walls not more than twenty feet high and quite scalable, as a robber band once learned. Skirting the lotus lake, at the farther end of which flourish banana groves and the Red Pagoda, I came to the customs compound and my home.

For this was the patch of green I had descried from the distant plateau. An enterprising American commissioner, whose assiduity was commensurate with his vision, twenty years before had planted eucalyptus trees, and now they had grown to lordly heights. My bungalow-like house snuggled beneath them. In the evening magpies slept in their tops, and

quite often a flock of egrets wending homewards from the paddy fields did me the honor of dropping their precious plumes at my feet. The leaves of the eucalyptus trees scented the air, so that rising in the early morning was a pleasure. But oftener I just lay in bed and breathed.

The longer wall, which was whitewashed and topped with red, separated my gardens from the French consulate, where a few hundred rifles and forty thousand rounds of ammunition were stored against an emergency. The shorter wall, which was completely buried in a bamboo hedge, cut me off from the Banque de l'Indo-Chine. The other two walls offered an obstacle to thieves and wandering pigs. They did not, however, prevent a snow leopard from astonishing me one morning. He lay in the heart of the bamboo hedge, whither I had lofted a golf ball on the preceding afternoon. Like all felines he disliked being prodded. With a disquieting snarl he leaped out and bounded into the lesser shrubs, where he probably lay until darkness. He was too beautiful to destroy.

On a certain Saturday afternoon in the latter part of September I walked for the first time into Mengtsz city. There was nothing new for me to see, although Mengtsz is quainter, being

founded on a knoll, than most Chinese metropolises. So I took one of the quiet roads leading along the little toppling wall, where only children play and where massive temple bells of solid bronze hang from the lower limbs of pine trees, with nothing but the wind to sound them. The temples were here, too, but I saw no priests. It was for all the world like the Street of the Dead in Pompeii, and I almost expected the children to run up to me, as the little beggars do in southern Italy.

The walls were brown and moss-covered like old tombs. The street was paved with flagstones, and the tiles of the temple roofs were gray; so it was not remarkable that I should have been attracted by a splash of moving color. It was a lady, daintily appareled, walking with mincing steps, though her feet were not lily ones. Her head was nearly obscured by a pink parasol with flat top and dropping sides. Two little girls romped along with her like attendant spirits.

The lady passed me, her eyes bent to the pavement, though I fancied I saw the glimmer of a smile about her lips. Then one of the little tots fell and lay crying, the other dancing merrily ahead, unheeding. So I stepped quickly over and righted the chubby darling, whose eyes were blinded with tears. When

TEMPLED BATTLEMENTS OF TOMBS

THE AUTHOR IN HIS GARDEN

she saw me she became instantly sober, disengaged herself from my hands, and sped to join her playmate. She clutched at the lady's dress and stood walking backward, gazing at me with smiles, while the other child recounted the incident to the lady.

I saw the latter stop, with a sort of arrested motion, like a line gliding into a point. Then she turned her head ever so slightly and regarded me, peering up between the edge of the parasol and her shoulder. Her face was of exquisite mold and amply framed by her hair, which lay in almost negligent neatness over her cheeks, making her look like a more animated Mona Lisa. She regarded me wonderingly for a moment before permitting her features to form a smile which might have been one of surprise, though I interpreted it as recognition.

"*Hai-tzu p'eng t'ou lo mo?*" I asked tremulously, fearing she would not answer. "Did the child bump its head?"

"*Mei p'eng lo t'ou lo,*" she replied in the negative. And then she added, "*Kei lao-yeh hsieh-ti to lo*—the honorable Sir has my sincerest thanks."

"*Ch'i kan, ch'i kan*—don't mention it," I answered, as she turned to go.

I stood watching her, waiting for I knew not

what. The children were constantly turning to look at me, and I could see she was speaking with them. Just before they made a bend in the road the lady turned and lifted her head coquettishly. But I felt this was to give me a view of her face, for she smiled friendlily as she passed from my view.

The tenth of October, marking the eighth anniversary of the Republic, was chosen by the local general as a day on which the district might do him honor. So he opened his spacious gardens in the heart of the city to the populace, all of whom crowded thither, not so much to honor him as to taste his food. I attended in my official capacity, and had the privilege of shaking the general's hand and being complimented on my knowledge of the language. Foreigners in China are always being told that they speak excellent Chinese. Such parlance makes easy conversation and is not provocative of violence. From courtesy I remained by the general's side while he probed my private affairs. The last question he put to me, when he learned I was going home, was, "*Chao hsi-fu ch'ü pu chao mo?*—are you going in search of a wife?" Thinking this a likely opportunity to get done with commonplaces I answered, "*Shih*,"—meaning that I was. The General smiled on me approvingly and buried

his face in a bowl of tea. Whereat I slipped into the gardens.

Except it be a bevy of laughing girls and smiling women, there is nothing prettier than Chinese gardens with their quaint little stone mountains and porcelain pagodas and artificial lakes with goldfish flecking the surface. I had long since learned that the Chinese gentler sex was amenable to appreciative eyes. So it was not without a certain definite intention that I sought the gardens. Custom forbade the wives and daughters to mingle in the sanctuary of the men. Perhaps for this reason the latter elected to wear those gorgeous ceremonial robes, now mostly the delight and the despair of envious occidental eyes. In excluding woman man knew he was hiding his choicest gem, so he took to himself as many of her piquant colorful ways as he could and yet retain his sex. The robes and ceremonies and elegancies of officialdom compensate for much, but they can never compensate for woman.

They were standing in groups of threes and fours in the shelter of apricot and potted lemon trees. When I passed near them they hung their heads or hid their faces behind silk fans, their eyes dancing with significant but silent thoughts. Had their mothers and grandmothers been with them they would not have

ventured even to smile, but would have appeared as if stricken motionless with fear. They were enjoying their moment of liberty, and being intoxicated with freedom and the desire for natural expression, they smiled. But not at me directly. They smiled to each other; even the virgins of twelve and fifteen years, catching the utter abandon of the occasion, stamped their pretty feet from the sheerest ecstasy. They cuddled against the silken sheen of their mothers' garments, and the latter joggled them with feigned solemnity.

I enjoyed it as much as they, but I knew better than to do what I should have liked to do: approach them with a mode of speech. I had learned from experience that even where I knew them I could make practically no headway. For often, until the utter futility of it impressed itself upon me, I had attempted to make conversation with these feminine folk. Had I happened on one alone, it would have been altogether different. It was not that they feared me but rather because of the common sentiment supposedly prevailing among their kind. In the first place it is not modest for a woman to pass the time of day with men. And, secondly, though man would like to have her, custom has decreed that woman is not intelligent enough to converse in a worth-while

way. Politically speaking, this may be true. For my own part I have found the talk of educated Chinese women every whit as intelligent as that of the average run of their husbands. Then too, the Chinese women, knowing how ardently their husbands adore modesty are prone to humor them in this respect. A case plainly of the weaker bowing to the stronger; but it has its virtues as well as its defects.

I sauntered by group after group of alluring damsels who did me the honor of blushing as violently as they could whenever I caught their eyes. It was early evening and the subdued glow of the Chinese lanterns served only to enhance the beauty of their faces. They were clothed brilliantly, and with an apparent disdain of the spectrum, for every conceivable color was in evidence and yet all was in good taste. The black hair and the gentle features, the slight fairy forms and dainty feet could not help but be adornments to the most extravagant colors.

The average Chinese woman is not physically so appealing as the Caucasian. At least, to begin with, one is not aware of her physical charm. First she exudes a spiritual vapor as enticing as it is mystifying. The Chinese women wear their souls on their sleeves and

have not thereby become less pure. But their bodies, those despotic organs of man which so often are his masters instead of his servants, are hidden away in mazes of shimmering silk, so that beautiful women radiate spiritual emanations, which, strangely enough, are far more seductive than physical ones. The latter are understandable and can, to a certain extent, be appropriated, but the former torment the soul and enervate the body with only the compensation of a dream.

I noticed behind an artificial hill an extravagantly dressed woman kneeling beside a hollow rock and dipping her fingers in water that bubbled in it like a spring. She was alone, though at a little distance stood a maid holding a scarf in both hands. Neither of them saw me at first, but as the lady turned to rise she caught sight of me in the shadow and instantly knelt again. I heard her say to the maid, "*Pieh têng wo, ni k'o i ts'ou k'an jen ch'ü*—don't wait for me, walk about and watch the crowd."

The maid was only too glad for this chance to gossip with her kind, and immediately flitted away. I stood quietly in the shadow watching, for I was not sure that the lady had seen me, or, even so, I could not guarantee that she had not also seen somebody else. So I waited until she turned her head in my direc-

tion. She was smiling with a certain restraint. Then she went on dipping her fingers in the pool, her voice startling me with this song:

"Hsi jen t'a wang lo wo,
"Hsien ts'ai bu hsiang wo,
"T'a hsiang t'a hsi kuo ku,
"Wo hsin-li hua lo."

"My Westerner's forgotten me,
"He thinks of me no longer,
"He dreams of his western love,
"My heart is melted away."

When the song ended and her voice trailed into a high falsetto, I came quickly out of the shadow, for I thought, nay, I was sure, I recognized her identity. But could it be? Yes, it was no other than the lady of the pink parasol. She had recognized me early in the evening and had taken this means of attracting my attention. After passing a few commonplaces I asked her her name. She replied, "Pak-koi." And then I learned that she owed her comparative liberty to being a teacher in a girl's primary school. We chatted pleasantly for a while, so pleasantly, in fact, that I wondered if I should ever have that pleasure again.

To this end I asked her about her honorable household.

"*Fu shang ts'ai na'rh chu?*—where is your palatial abode?"

"My humble hut's inside the city near the little southern gate," she answered.

"*Chia chuan yu to hsiao jen?*" I asked. "How many people are there in your house?"

"I live alone," she replied.

"Then you are not married?"

"Oh, no. I find an independent life more charming."

"Then I may call some afternoon for tea?"

"The master would not presume to leave his palace for my miserable quarters."

"Wouldn't he, though?" I returned in English.

When she asked me what I said, I found myself unable to render this phrase in idiomatic Chinese, so I said, "*Na shih Nin-na shuo ti hua, wo yao lai*—that's your way of putting it. I'll come."

NEIGHBORS FROM INDIA

MY DAPPLED STALLION WHO ONCE WAS WILD

CHAPTER XIII

My dappled stallion carried me into the plains, then up to the verge of the hills whence I had a glimpse of the jungle flowering away to the south. I rode through smallpoxed villages where all those not dead were living. By which I mean that so long as there was life it called for ceaseless activity. There was no laying it gradually down, as the successful man does in the Western world. It was work, work, work. Death was deliverance from work. No wonder these pagan peoples are stoical in the face of sorrow! The children ran about their games with scaling faces. My pony shied at a corpse. In another moment I had passed through, not thinking of danger, and only keen for the glories that lay beyond.

Titian should have known these hills. They are nearly mountains. I rode to the foot of them in the early glow of evening. The red soil caught up light from incarnadined clouds and burned an impassioned crimson. Peasant women, carrying bundles of hay, flared in

their blues and greens like gems on a Raja's finger.

One afternoon de Lusignan, a Britisher, and I went riding during harvest. It was nearly dusk when we rode back between the waving grains. Little thatched shelters set on stilts were the only signs of man. These were look-out posts for watchers of the grain. Not a human did we see until we came to a rocky road where we dismounted to lead our ponies. De Lusignan remarked a native squatting on an embankment. The native was smoking his long pipe with quiet stolidity. The only movement discernible was in his hand and arm which shuttled slowly back and forth as he drew the pipe from his mouth and put it back again.

"I'd give a dollar to know what he's thinking about," said de Lusignan.

"If you gave a penny, you'd be paying too much," I answered quickly.

And I believe truth was in my words. The native was tired and worn. The day's work was done, and he had gotten out of the bustle of men to have a quiet smoke. There may have been a pinch of opium in the bowl. This was no concern of mine. He was the picture of intellectual blankness and physical contentment. I would not have had him think for worlds.

An official envelope, an invitation from the magistracy of Kotchiu to visit the tin mines, was brought me one morning by a squad of soldiers. Quite by the way, as a sort of postscript, I was informed that the governor would allot me a hundred armed men for a guard. It looked as though I were being done excessive honor until I mentioned the matter to de Lusignan, who, as a representative of the British American Tobacco Company, had often traveled in the hinterland. He explained that the guard was accorded me because of the robbers who at that time were unwontedly rampant.

"You see, it's like this," said de Lusignan. "If you're shot, a big how-do-you-do'll result. The governor's not taking chances on a government official."

"Then you don't think I'll get shot," I said.

"Not unless a sharpshooter pots you from the hills," de Lusignan answered.

With this last thought tingling in my brain I set out one morning with my hundred soldiers straggling in front of and behind me. I noticed that most of them wore their cartridge belts upside down, and on inquiry learned that this was to keep the lead from dropping out. Occasionally even, the lead drops out when the trigger is pulled. But more often it stays

put. It is a notorious fact that nearly four rounds of ammunition are allotted the Chinese soldier for target practice each year. I say nearly four rounds because, when deductions are made for graft, only about a round and a half are left for consumption. The remembrance of this was consoling. If the Republican soldier gets only a round and a half, what chance has a mere robber? I thought. Later on I had this question answered in rather a practical manner.

It was nearly nightfall when we came to a wooded hill and my Chinese companion said, "This is the spot where they had a battle last year."

"A battle?" I queried.

"Between robbers and our soldiers," the Chinese explained.

"Oh," I replied simply.

I thought a moment before I asked him, "Do you think there is any likelihood of our being attacked?" I was really hoping for a skirmish.

"You had better loosen your pistol," he answered without hesitancy.

We came to the top of the wooded hill without mishap, but when we reached the other side I heard the sound of scattered shots. It was quite dark now. Riding back to look

down on the plain we had so recently quitted, I saw a flare of red against the evening sky. With the aid of binoculars I made out a group of burning huts, possibly a mile away.

"They are attacking a village," said my Chinese companion. "No doubt they saw our soldiers and waited till we got by."

"Can we do nothing?" I asked.

"No. We ourselves may be attacked higher up. Why should we risk our heads for theirs? We may have need of them before we reach the mines."

As this was incontrovertible logic I said no more. I had been too long in China to want to interfere with business not ostensibly my own. But I could not beat back a wave of pity for the defenceless villagers. Poor people! They had done nobody harm. But because the government had not paid the army, some big fat official having appropriated the funds set aside for that purpose, the soldiers had taken their welfare into their own hands, absconded with rifles and ammunition, and begun to exemplify that well-known Western formula "The world owes me a living."

On my return to Mengtsz I learned that a notorious robber chief had been captured and was to be publicly executed on the following Saturday. The city was tense with excite-

ment. It became tenser on Saturday morning when it learned that the chief's confrères had scaled the city walls and forcibly lifted their leader. They had also lifted the souls of about fifty government soldiers, the prison guards, who learned to their sorrow that there was not so much distinction as excitement in guarding a robber chief. In China death is always exciting.

Jarland, the French military doctor who conducted a native hospital in one of the nearby fields, was always asking me down to see the machinery of a story. And in and about Mcngtsz the most exciting stories had to do with the robbers. Perhaps it was only a local thief who had climbed into Jarland's compound and climbed out again, guarding his exit with a knife bound to a bamboo pole. In the darkness it would not be pleasant to impale oneself on a knife at a hopeless distance from an adversary. So Jarland merely took pot shots at them as they went over the wall. The next day they came to him for treatment of their wounds.

The villagers were, of course, defenceless, and the pirates, as the French commissioner insisted on terming them, were brutes. It is never wise to offer opposition to a brute; dumb ones excepted. One day I saw four men with

the muscular portions of their backs frightfully burned. A handful of roving pirates had attacked their village, encountering a stout resistance. When the robbers finally subdued them, they unsheathed their cavalry sabers, relics of the elder von Moltke's army, and slashed the backs of the ill-fated countrymen. Then they poured kerosene oil into the cuts and applied the torch. The victims of this barbarous treatment did not die. Three of them recovered and went back to the soil. The fourth went back to the soil too; but in a figurative sense. Losing the use of his arms, he went a-begging.

But it was by no means robbers, robbers, all the way. There was much else to divert my attention. A sort of bund skirts the lotus lake, and here a multitude of merchants thrive, their families sprawling on the flagstone road in front of the shops. One day, as I was walking by, I saw a pretty child of six or seven years having her feet bound for the first time. I had always imagined that the feet were bound from infancy, but later learned that the legs are permitted to attain a fair strength before being thus outraged. The child had started to whimper. No wonder! Her little toe was pointing toward her heel. It would not reach there for a number of

years. But there is nothing like a strong and early start. The little girl whimpered and then her mother, noticing my interest, said to her, "Don't cry. There's a foreigner looking at you. You don't want him to see you cry." Instantly the incipient woman dried her tears and smiled through them, though she could not help twisting her mouth, for there were no slack places in the bandages.

Why do they do this? I have asked many questions in China, and I have tried to answer them. The natives can only counter with the timeworn phrase, "*Yu fa-tzu*—it is the custom." Or else they give you facetious reasons which are more humorous than true. On the other hand I suppose it is not altogether unsignificant that the sages, when they devised an ideograph meaning talkativeness or loquacity, should have simply written the primitive symbol for woman thrice.

I came near shooting a native farmer once. I was out for wild pigeon, and on my way back heard an unearthly screaming over a *kao-liang* fence. A man was beating his wife. I stood the affair as long as I could before jumping the fence and pointing my gun at him. I was so indignant that I actually pulled one of the triggers. But the shell was empty and I had not ejected it. So I merely clubbed

him over the shoulders until he desisted. "She talks too much," he said. He was quite right. Her tongue followed me down the road.

When the moon came full and the Tibetan cranes flapped in solitary grandeur above the lesser clouds, the Chinese commenced one of their quaintest festivals. Huge yellow cakes as large as drumheads were baked and eaten. A variety of lesser things, all of them edible, banked the shop fronts, so that as I walked along I was nearly overcome with rich narcotic odors. Little knots of natives stood in the open streets, beneath the dimmed blue of the sky, gazing wistfully at the yellow moon and silently munching their cakes. The mellow harvest moon is the giver of all good gifts, for in China nothing is so valuable as food.

But at this particular time nature had decreed that the earth should cast a shadow on its satellite. Their beloved moon was in imminence of being swallowed by the black dragon of the skies. So the whole countryside banded together and went into the fields, armed only with kettles and pots and drums, and sticks with which to beat them. All night long they clamored noisily. For a few moments it actually seemed as though the black dragon would accomplish his execrable purpose. But in the littler hours of the morning he

began to give way. When they saw they had him on the run, the farmers beat their kettles more vigorously than ever. And as eventually they succeeded, they became more convinced than ever of their prowess. Thus is superstition born.

My writer's wife who took opium to relieve the rack of childbirth died suddenly one morning. I went into the home to see what I could do. The husband and father was wringing his hands in despondency. It was not so much sorrow as the spirit of hopelessness that dominated his soul. A boy of twelve stood staring wide-eyed beside the bier. Two little girls prattled noisily on the floor. Three native priests occupied the center of the room. One beat a drum with monotonous precision. Another burnt pieces of paper with words of intercession written on them. He lighted the second from the first, and so on. The third twirled a Tibetan prayer wheel and accompanied the whine of the inter-revolving discs with a pagan chant. But the oppression of sorrow did not pass from that house.

I could only place my hand on my writer's arm and murmur, "*K'o lien, k'o lien*—what a pity." Then I turned incompetently away.

I don't know who was at fault, Pak-koi or I. Perhaps I should have sought her out in

A GROUP OF LITTLE FOLK

A TIBETAN PRAYER WHEEL

her home near the little south gate. I must confess to having walked often in the quiet street and to having lingered an absurdly long while by the big bronze bell. I even went so far as to tempt a couple of boys aside with a handful of coppers, but Pak-koi signified nothing to them. I had been so charmed by her that evening in the gardens that I foolishly omitted to be pertinent. I had done the same thing before in a different way. Often, while hunting in the jungle, I happened on flowers of extravagant beauty, thinking to claim them on my way out. But invariably they evaded a second glance. The same is true of thoughts. They flit away seldom to return. When they do, it is owing to the kindliness of the gods. And the gods were kind to me.

It was the week before Christmas that my Chinese clerk announced a man with a personal message. The man, a decrepit old fellow of exquisite manners, whose faltering limbs gave the appearance of obsequiousness, carried the message both in his head and on a card in a dainty red envelope. The card was for courtesy's sake, and a tribute to my understanding of the written tongue. The old man put on a pair of square-rimmed spectacles and read it out to me in a paternal voice. The gist of what he read was this: "Li Li Fang begs that

the Honorable Sir will deign to adorn her poor house on Christmas day. She is not a Christian but she thinks many of their customs beautiful, and among them none more charming than the Christmas tree. Will the Honorable Sir be so good as to lend local color to the festivities? The children will adore him and have promised not to be frightened. It is at four o'clock, but the Honorable Sir may come earlier."

"Pak-koi?" I questioned as composedly as the occasion warranted.

"A-a-a-ah, Pak-koi, Pak-koi," returned the old man with startling celerity.

Pak-koi must have been a term of endearment some one had given her. The sounds composing it are distinctly southern Chinese, so I have no inkling of its meaning. Considering Pak-koi herself, Pak-koi might well have been a very lavish adjective.

I gave the old man a ten-dollar gold piece with which to buy sweetmeats and candies for the children. It took me nearly twenty minutes to press it into his palm. At first he thought it a tip of which I did not know the value. But in the end his anæmic fingers closed over the coin and he tottered into the street.

Three o'clock of Christmas afternoon found

the old man waiting outside my door to conduct me to my hostess. In twenty minutes we were standing in front of the devil screen of a quaint little house in the shadow of a Buddhist temple. I presume the bell in the quiet street was a sort of outlying sign of religiousness. Circumventing the devil screen, we entered a tiny courtyard where a bevy of little girls were throwing colored paper butterflies into the air and catching them as they floated down again. Involuntarily I paused to see the sheer beauty of the little women. Up and down they danced like a flower garden in motion. Then one by one they caught sight of me, and the butterflies fluttered down unheeded. An older girl sped into the house, crying in a voice that rippled, "*K'o jen lai lo*—the guest has come." In another moment Pak-koi herself was welcoming me.

It was the first time I had really had a look at her. She was garmented in a dark silk of which the pattern was a chrysanthemum and the color blue. Her coat, a sort of jacket and waist combined, was short, though the sleeves were long, terminating in peaks that ran over her fingers. She was wearing a blue skirt of the same material as her coat, only over this a black lace overskirt was worn so that the color shone through it like wistaria

seen through a latticework. Champagne satin slippers, of which only the points were visible, adorned her feet. The collar of her coat reached nearly to her chin and the effect of the blue of the silk, the black of her hair, and the rose-tint of her complexion as they mingled in the vicinity of her eyes is quite indescribable.

I don't think I have ever seen a Chinese woman with features so pronouncedly Occidental as Pak-koi's. Instead of wearing her raven hair parted in the middle she wore it parted considerably on one side and fluffed up on top so that she seemed taller than she really was. Her beauty was by no means fragile, like that of so many Chinese ladies of the better class, but rather immanent as if she had never taken thought of her personal appearance but radiated loveliness instinctively. Her cheeks lay under blue-black eyes like two inverted rose petals. Fairer than any jungle flower, how nearly I had missed thee!

The Christmas tree was set on the *k'ang*, or dais, of the living room. My ten-dollar gold piece, transformed into a sugared menagerie, lay on a square piece of yellow silk about the base of it. The branches of the little conifer supported tiny beggars and tradesmen done in clay and dressed like grown-ups; also priests with real hairs for whiskers and rosaries

of colored glass. There was a storybook for every one and an etched silver incense burner for me. The children played games not wholly unlike our own. When Pak-koi asked me to contribute one I suggested Drop the Handkerchief, which the little folk seemed to like immensely.

Afterwards, with the help of my hostess as interpreter, I told them something of the meaning of Christmas. And then they all ran home in the twilight.

Besides beautiful silken scrolls representing old ancestral wars, the living-room walls were hung with pieces of kussa tapestry. The floor was partially covered with a gray camel's-hair rug with a dragon in blue in the center. In a corner, on a rostral-like teak column, sat a Buddha in gold. Beneath the beneficent repose of the Buddha's eyes were a table and two chairs. Here Pak-koi and I sat ourselves down, while a serving maid set a porcelain teapot and two dainty cups between us.

"Why is it that I am so content?" I asked her, commencing the conversation.

"Perhaps it is the peacefulness of Christmas," she answered, feigning solemnity.

"No," I said, "it is not that."

"Then what?" she queried, looking up at me with rich interest flushing her satiny throat.

"It is the feeling that I am akin to you, to your people, instead of just a barbarian from over the widest sea."

"I have not felt that way before, O Westerner."

"Then you, too, are experiencing it, Pak-koi?"

"I think it because spiritually you and I are so childlike. What did the great teacher write? 'The child's heart and the man's mind, poetry and philosophy: this is God.'"

The ceiling over our heads was painted in blue and gold and purple. The house had manifestly once been part of a temple. A lantern of multi-colored silks depended from one of the painted beams, shedding its soft light like a sort of heavenly benediction over us. I thought of everything in the world to say, but felt that all had been said. The atmosphere of China, like lethe, crept almost insidiously into my blood; and we sat there like figures in one of the tapestries on the wall, she quaintly resigned, and I oppressed with the weight of her loveliness.

CHAPTER XIV

Ragot, the station master at Pishihchai, and I early struck up a friendship. He was an inveterate sportsman with a corresponding imagination. In other ways he was quite human. He liked good wines and crisp tobacco. Papillon, or Butterfly, attested the connoisseur in women. I had many times to thank heaven for Papillon. Mengtsz grew unbearable in moments. My home was like a castle set on the edge of the world. The days were long and the evenings eternity. When I felt like drinking myself to death, as a brilliant Englishman had done before me, I saddled my pony and clattered over to Pishihchai. The Flea-Infested-Spot was ugly and sat on the bare top of a hill like a wart on a bald-headed man's pate.

But I never tired of Ragot's tales of the hunt. And then Papillon was there to serve me, always flitting about, ever smiling and never provoked; not even when Ragot got stupidly drunk and ran about on all fours like a pig. On Sunday mornings we took our guns and

Ragot's dog and hitched ourselves to the rear of the Yunnanfu express. I say hitched ourselves, because that is literally what we did. Ragot tied a rope to his lorry and passed the other end through an iron ring near the coupling joint. To keep the lorry from running under the coach we planted our feet against the edge of the platform. As children we all have accomplished something similar when we fastened our sleds to the back of a pung and then slipped the rope when we reached our destination. It was a wild ride down the mountain side and up the farther hills. Going down, we made excessive speed, like a coal train running away. Climbing, when the engine made a sudden burst, we were nearly pulled from our seats. Pateau, the dog, who had done this many times before, slumbered between us.

When we reached a point opposite the hill on which we purposed to hunt, Ragot slipped the rope. But he had tied an extra large knot in the end of it to prevent fraying, and this caught in the ring. Against our wills we sped merrily on. Some moments elapsed before Ragot had the foresight to bend down and cautiously pull hand over hand on the rope, as one pulls in an anchor. Perhaps he had pulled a half of the rope in when the knot slipped clear, and he bounded back like a

rubber ball, hitting the bench with such force that it went over like falling lead. Fortunately it had been set at the very front edge of the lorry. We hung on to the bench and gravity did the rest. When we finally came to a stop we looked whitely into each other's eyes.

"God," said Ragot. It was the English word he used oftenest.

"Ragot, this is no time for profanity," I countered.

"*Eh bien*," he returned, with an uncomprehending look.

"Well, we won't pray either," I answered, picking up my traps.

In the village at the foot of the hill Ragot sought out a native acquaintance of his who had charge of a temple a little higher up. We gave our bags and food into the hands of this fellow who, while we hunted, was to clean the temple and prepare us a meal. Dogs bayed us on all sides. Bright-looking children ran after us as we strode down the narrow streets. Fresh-skinned women hung their heads, thinking thus to gain the approval of their mates who kept a stolid demeanor. A few of them covertly smiled at me, and then broke into foolish laughter when they were safely by. Old women, leaning on crooked sticks, stared at us through bleared lids. I heard their toothless munching

lips mumble "*Hsi kuo jen*—Western men" as we passed by.

The mountain on which we hunted was rocky and precipitous, and covered with thick brush and the tenacious mountain pine. Ragot carried a machete-like knife with which he hacked a passage. I had loaded my gun with two shells, one for pheasant, the other for panther. There was no way of knowing which one I should have need of first. Below us stretched the plains, the railway cleaving them with its glittering steel.

Finally Pateau put up a golden pheasant. It whished off like a shot. Ragot, who had been expecting a find, fired on the instant. It did not seem possible that he could have been quick enough for the bird. But a search proved otherwise. The fine shot had almost plucked this prettiest bird of the China woods. After striking two speckled grouse and a woodcock we came to the top of the mountain. Large black bowlders were everywhere in profusion. A table of green grazing land lay a little to one side. On the edge of it flourished a clump of acacia trees. I thought this a likely spot for a rest.

After photographing me holding the golden pheasant Ragot turned his attention to the rocks. I noticed him watching a large flat

CHINESE LANDSCAPE FROM A MOUNTAIN TOP

bowlder with narrowed eyes, but then Ragot was always narrowing his eyes. It was not until he grasped me tightly by the arm and drew me beside him that I recovered my usual faculties.

"Can you make him out?" he asked.

"Make what out?" I returned softly.

"*Le tigre*," he whispered, between nearly closed lips.

"There are no tigers here," I replied anxiously.

"*Une panthère donc*," he answered, with a gesture of impatience.

"A panther!" I ejaculated, raking the top of the bowlder with my eyes.

"Watch carefully now," cautioned Ragot, as he sighted, resting on the crook of his left arm.

I could make nothing out but the irregular top of the rock until the roar of the shotgun burst on my ears. In the same instant I saw a lithe form whip into the air, and bound with a whining shriek over the brink of the mountain. I had barely been able to make out a red streak between the panther's ears. It all flashed before me like a cinematograph exposure.

Ragot was cursing softly in liquid French.

"You grazed him," I proffered.

But still the French flowed in voluble profusion. After a little, when the air was cleared

of smoke and language, we made our way down to the temple. Our man was there. He had laid out a white table cover in front of the sitting gods. A quart of pinard stood like a beacon of hope beside each plate. The gods looked down on us disdainfully as we ate. Not so the rabble which hovered outside the door. It is pleasant to watch humans enjoy food that ordinarily one would throw to dogs. We had brought a prodigality of food and we carried none back. Friendship is an elastic principle to be nourished in devious ways. This village became our friend.

Our ponies had been led out to us, so we rode them back, leaving the lorry to be picked up by a returning freight. About halfway back to Pishihchai a herd of wild ponies got wind of us and came racing up, to attack, as we thought, our stallions. But the beautiful beasts were only evincing curiosity. One of them did come near my dappled gray as if to bite him. I drew my revolver, prepared for the worst, for it would never do to be thrown among them. There was much snorting and rearing, and I had to thank heaven I was hard to the saddle. In the end they dashed off the way they had come, leaving us envious of their speed.

Some eight miles to the north of Pishihchai

we entered the Valley of The Fragrant Springs. It was an oval plot of green surrounded by wooded hills, with occasional abandoned temples spotting the slopes with their green and yellow roofs. A stream ran through the center of the valley, being the only sign of movement visible. A fleckless sky overarched the hills and I felt like Rasselas, though at the moment I doubted if I should ever want to escape, so utterly entrancing was this perfect cameo of nature.

I had noticed Ragot sweeping the verdant amphitheater with his binoculars, but thought nothing particular of it until I hear him exclaim with suppressed excitement, "*Nom de Dieu, elles sont venues.*"

"Who are come?" I questioned, dropping into the idiom of his tongue.

"*Les femmes steriles,*" he replied, his powerful frame a-quiver.

"Barren women!" I cried, following the line of his glasses with popping eyes.

"*Mais oui,*" he returned. "They come down from the hills each year during the Festival to bare their bosoms to the moon. I am ignorant of the result. Only I know men are not allowed."

"You mean to say no men accompany them?"

"Just that."

"And how long do they stay?"

"Oh, from one new moon to the next. The real transformation takes place between moons in the dark. When they return to the villages they are nearly savage, and their husbands have been known to flee them."

"Do we pass near them?" I questioned, involuntarily loosening my pistol in its holster.

"Do we pass near them! *Nom de Dieu*, we stay to watch. You are not afraid?"

"Watch what?" I queried, ignoring the latter thrust.

"The Moon Dance," Ragot replied, slipping down from his pony and unfastening a blanket from the pommel.

"It is two hours to dark," he went on. "We had best not ride farther into the valley. We don't want them to see us. When the moon gets up we'll lead the ponies to the edge of the wood; then we can make our way up the hill on foot."

There was something so altogether wild and fantastic in the idea that I did not see how Ragot could take it so lightly. Nor did he sleep. He merely rolled his blanket into a pillow and lay on his back, his eyes wide open and staring into the ever deepening blue. For want of a better occupation I put fresh

cartridges in my pistol. "Wild horses in the afternoon, wild women in the evening! What next?" I thought, reaching for Ragot's binoculars with my unemployed hand.

The sun sought Burma in a flare of red, and night ran down from the Yunnan steppes like a river of shadow. Stars appeared by twos and threes until the sky was a jeweled firmament. After a little I saw a red glow steal over the crest of the hills. A crimson indeterminate rim pushed over the edge of the darkness, and then the jungle moon poured up till it stood clear of the night. Like a molten disc it burned, mounting ever upwards, the crimson merging into red, the red finally into yellow, until it became the familiar mellow moon of New England harvest time. I stood like one bewitched, when Ragot plucked my arm. "Come," he said simply.

We led our ponies along the shadow of the wood, stopping at a point just below the temple roofs. Picketing the tired beasts to sapling pines we crept upward like scouts of an army. It needed only five minutes to gain the temple walls. For a moment our breathing engaged our ears. Then a shuffling sound broke on us through the stillness of the wood, followed by cries like the chant of samurai warriors.

I turned to look for Ragot and found him climbing a tree. Instinctively I did the same, not dreaming what this vantage-point would disclose. Turning my back against the trunk I looked into the temple courtyard, and for the second (or was it thousandth?) time my soul was in my eyes.

Perhaps twenty women wearing only demi-skirts, barefooted, with their raven tresses falling to naked shoulders, moved in rhythmic progress over the flagstone floor. Some were undeniably young, eighteen or twenty from their looks, whose willowy bodies rippled milk-white in the moonlight. Others were manifestly women of ripened years, for their forms were no longer like the clay of an hour's working. Their breasts stood out firm and bold, while their waists curved outward into hips of daring, though not undelicate, strength. Then there were women nearly old, flat-breasted and bent, whose ungraceful movements simulated Salem witches in their heyday.

But all of them, young and old, seemed caught in the grasp of some extravagant power. Every now and then they paused in the dance and bared their untried breasts to the mounting moon, striking their bosoms with their open hands, and chanting those wild mysterious cries that, though harsh and raucous to my

NEAR THE VALLEY OF FRAGRANT SPRINGS

SHRINE IN THE VALLEY OF FRAGRANT SPRINGS

Western ears, were not without an element of music.

"I'd give a fortune for this picture," I whispered across to Ragot.

"You wouldn't live to enjoy it," he cryptographically answered.

"You don't mean—" I began.

"But I do," he said, laying his fingers to his lips with an ominous "Sh."

We watched them for upwards of an hour before they began to tire. First the very old ones drooped away, and then the very young, leaving the most virile to continue the dance alone. Knowing that childless foreign women worshipped the little mud gods of Fertility I could not be surprised at the superstition of these paragons from the hills. We clambered down from our perches in the trees with all the reluctance of persons getting out of bed on a frosty morning. Like men surfeited with rich food we saddled the ponies, asleep where they stood, and rode out of the Valley of The Fragrant Springs, back to Pishihchai.

When the railway was building, Pishihchai was not the deserted flea-infested spot that it is now. Money flowed freely, and men's lives were only worth the cracks of pistols that snuffed them out. Ragot told me one tale that will bear repeating. An Italian and a Greek

got into a gambling feud. Night after night they sat at the table and played, an admiring circle of comrades looking on. The game was poker. On a Saturday night the Italian got up from his chair with six thousand silver dollars in his bags. The Greek got up with his hands in his jeans. Each one grasped a stick of dynamite. That night when the Italian was dreaming of villas and dark-eyed maidens, the Greek crept into his house and planted the dynamite under the bed. He did not, however, omit to remove the bags of silver. The rest of the story is inevitable. The Greeks always had a genius for tragedy.

When the rainy season set in, I was constantly on the watch for trains sliding into the valley. Ninety-one is the name of a famous viaduct on the line. It was known to have been weakened by rains of the previous year. But the French administration was unwilling to pour cheap gold into expensive silver. So Ninety-one gradually crumpled, till one clear night, when the moon had broken through wet clouds and driven them over the rim of the hills, it gave completely away. Coincidence will never cease to engage men's minds. The last straw was the midnight freight. It might have gotten over safely had not the bowels of the earth rumbled just then. I felt my bed

rocking and dashed onto the veranda in time to hear a sliding roar as Ninety-one and the ill-fated freight jangled into the plains.

"Thank heaven there were only natives aboard," said a French lady the next afternoon at tea. I could only murmur assent to this, though the natives' lives were undoubtedly as valuable as our own. But not in our opinions. What would man do if he were totally dependent on man?

Raymond Racine, fine gentleman and friend, was the heart of the Mengtsz colony. He was a philosopher whose meditations he once summed up for me in the following words. He chose them with the nice discrimination of a French savant.

"I am like a man part way up a ladder," he said. "I have no knowledge how I came so far. I do not even know if I have come far. I look neither up nor down. I merely keep my feet firmly on the rung and look about me. *Je regarde surtout la vie.* Above all I watch life."

Not far from Racine's home was the Red Pagoda, the most distinctly oriental touch to the Mengtsz landscape. A former colleague used it as a summer sleeping-house until he heard that the natives were growling against what they considered desecration of a holy place. It was deserted when I climbed the

swaying bamboo ladder to the upper floor and looked out on vistas of banana trees, over the lotus lake and away to the farther hills. But once it had held the attention of the countryside and its fame is said to have reached as far as Peking.

In the olden days, when the local lord was virtually an emperor, he became enamored of one of the native princesses from the hills. She already had plighted her troth secretly to another, but her father turned deaf ears on her implorings and gave her to the ruler of the plains. Her hill lover followed her into the city and there obtained a minor position in the government, but such a one as permitted him occasional meetings with his beloved. Spurning the caresses of her Mengtsz lord she sought only those of her lover from the hills.

But in time they were discovered, and the jealous and enraged ruler imprisoned her in the Red Pagoda and publicly executed her lover in the square opposite. After the execution he went haughtily to see if now she would receive him with caresses. But he found her spirit flown, united in death as in life with her lover from the hills.

The early winter season of 1919 had been especially dry. But I did not imagine the

cobalt lake would seek the bowels of the earth for that reason. About Mengtsz there had always been a superstition of the Unknown River that led to the Everlasting Fires where the devils abode. I knew that periodically, when the lower regions got too hot, the Dark One Himself sucked water down to dim his unquenchable flames. In my mind the entire affair was only a picturesque story until the cobalt lake dwindled to a mere stream trickling out of a cavernous hole as wine drips from a barrel.

One of my outdoor men, who had been years in the district, had witnessed the sight before but he had not gone in. He could get nobody to go with him. When I mentioned the matter he remembered his old enthusiasm and proposed that we should go in together. The entire native population of Pishihchai gathered in the marketplace to wonder at our rashness. Children whimpered behind their mothers' trousers. The very dogs stopped barking, as if they too would fain have had us stay. Old men shook their heads incredulously. This boded evil for everyone. For one morning the lake was gone; the next it was there again. It was emptied and filled with the speed of light. Who were we to mock the power of devils?

"There's only one danger," said Listrom, my outdoor man, "and that's that the river will catch us inside."

"'Tis our chance," I returned, as we made our way cautiously down.

The bed of the lake was like a giant amphitheatre; not muddy, but of the red gravelly soil of the hills. It was as if a monstrous shell had been detonated there, and the rains had filtered down to form a little stream. When we got to the bottom and looked up, we could see only the sky above us. It was worth while to have gone down just for this. The blue was deep, like the color of Chinese wistaria.

I was surprised that no fish were lying about. The lake abounded in carp and commoner kinds. In the stream a few minnows darted at our shadows. Probably the bigger ones had gone down to propitiate the gods of the darkness. I knew that after a drought fishing was abandoned. Thus was another superstition born.

The mouth of the cavern stood straight up like a horseshoe. It was black inside, but strangely enough, when we got in, we could see without the aid of a torch. The floor was composed of terraced rock, once slippery, but now fairly dry, and carpeted with a mossy fungus on which our boots fell noiselessly. The floor

of the cavern led up a little way, and then it took a tunnel-like downward course.

I had been so concerned with watching my feet, for we had to be mindful of crevices, that I did not at first notice the source of the cavern's illumination. Choosing a shelving to sit on, I looked up at strangely illumined icicles that shed an unsteady glow, like coals on a hearth. They were manifestly phosphorescent in their nature. For a moment one shone like a frosted candle; then the light went out. Large bats, like little devils, flitted among them. At times they clung to them, as moths cling to a lamp. The sight of the bats reassured me. If they lived in there, the water could not fill the cavern after all. I did not think of egress through the top.

By seven o'clock we had gone in perhaps a half a mile, when Listrom suggested that we camp for the night. Selecting an especially soft terrace we settled down, ate a portion of our food, and prepared our couches. We had along food for seven days. We expected to be gone only three. After that time we were to be searched for.

I was fast asleep when Listrom pinched me on the arm. Nor did he desist. I sat up, and still he was pinching me. First I looked at my arm which was wet with blood where his nails

bit in. Then I looked at Listrom. My eyes and arm only were awake. The rest of my faculties still slept.

Shall I ever forget Listrom's face? To write that I saw fear stamped in every feature would be to intimate that I saw nothing else. But I saw much else. I saw a doomed man facing torture. I saw him standing beside the rack, mounting the gallows, laying his head on the block. I saw his dilated nostrils that did not grow small again. I saw staring eyes that did not blink. I saw his customarily wine-red cheeks gone white like my lime-washed walls. I saw,—and then I heard.

I heard a sound coming from afar. It was a smooth sound like the lap and suck of waves. It rose and fell, rose and fell, beating the windless warmth into a current of audible eddies. It whished like the wind, whined like hail, and soughed like rubbing limbs.

I jerked Listrom to his feet. His fear had rendered me sensible. Abandoning everything but my gun, I pulled him after me. I had thrust his weapon into his trembling hands. They closed on it as a drowning man's fingers close on the throat of his rescuer.

Upwards we slipped and ran. While running terror made our senses dead. It was only when we fell that the gently increasing sound reached

after us. It seemed to run visibly along the walls as wind waves down a field of corn. The gleaming stalactites barred our flight like inverted flames. On, on we slipped and ran, ran and slipped, with that haunting, horrifying, beautiful sound enveloping us like a symphony of death.

We were near the top of the rise. The depending stalactites seemed to pierce the floor, like molten fingers. Then they lifted, lifted. We were nearly up. Then Listrom went down with a twisted knee. I bent over him, imploringly. But he would not go on. I started. I could feel the air now beating against my face with little forceful puffs. The sound rose like a forced draft. It did everything but roar. It pulsed with inconceivable energy.

I lifted Listrom across my thighs, dragging him to the top. There I rested an instant before starting down, down to light and life. But scarcely had I taken a dozen steps before I staggered against the oncoming air. I felt myself being beaten down. I fell, Listrom falling across me. I took a deep breath and closed my lips tightly. I made myself taut for the blow.

It came and I felt like one being hammered against a rock. My breath went from me with a gasp. I swallowed and then I breathed again.

I shut my eyes and lay still. But the water did not come. The wind passed and the sound vanished like a cloud.

I got up and dragged Listrom to the mouth of the cavern. I stepped out and looked up. The sky was blackened with birds. It was morning but the sun was hid.

Twelve hours later the cobalt lake shone again in its exquisite blue.

CHAPTER XV

RACINE'S going was a sort of prelude to my own departure. I knew the Ides of March were fast approaching, that the big *Empress* then would bear me to my own shores. But before Racine went he married his lady from Japan. He considered it the only proper thing to do. She had served him faithfully for nearly thirty years. He could not abandon her now. And though we knew disappointment awaited him when he came to France, we hadn't the hearts to counsel him otherwise.

They were married in the French consulate that lay just over the wall from me. The women of the port, three in number, all were there. The children came too, and because of the extravagant nature of the occasion were permitted a glass of champagne just like the grown-ups. We toasted Raymond Racine, bachelor gentleman, for the last time, and then we all crowded into the little room where Flayelle, the squinting consul, in blue with yellow braid, and a cocked admiral's hat, married them.

"Do you take this man to be your wedded wife?" demanded old Flayelle, boring the little lady through and through with his one eye.

We laughed uproariously and bantered the old consul for his mistake. But he went imperturbably on to the end. Then Racine kissed her, the consul mopped his brow with a crested handkerchief, and we all went out for another toast. "*Vive Racine, vive la madame, vive la France!*"

In the evening we assembled in the dining room of Fortin's hotel. When the railway was building it had been the stage for many a wild festivity, and brave men's blood had stained its knotty boards. We had a decrepit Pathé phonograph and the national anthems of Greece, Italy and France. To these we danced. After we danced we toasted Madame Racine. The gracious Raymond had mounted a billiard table to make a speech. But emotion overcame him. So he danced one of his fanciful Algerian figures until our cheeks were wet with champagne tears of mirth.

"I cannot imagine that I am leaving this place forever," he said, turning beyond the lotus lake to look for the last time on the Red Pagoda and beside it the little white bungalow that had been his home for twelve long years.

We put him on the train and watched him, wet-eyed, into the distanee. So vanished Raymond Raeine.

Père Goudot, who had been thirty-six years among the tribes and who got twenty-eight dollars a year for his serviees, drifted down from the hills one day and looked on a white man for the first time in seven years. He had a fine sensitive face with thin quivering lips that affeeted me like other people's tears. I asked him many questions about the natives in the hills.

"Why don't you go baek with me for a eouple of days?" he asked. He spoke French with a slight hesitation, as if he were not sure of his grammar. He had not spoken it during those seven years.

As I was soon to leave the distriet I aeeepted his invitation with alaerity. On a Tuesday morning while the settlement was yet abed, we mounted the eastern rim of the mountain until we touehed a tableland. From here we rode twelve miles northeast, passing many native villages, some of them manifestly harboring nearly savage folk, and others like the towns of the Chihli plains. On four o'eloek of a Wednesday afternoon we came to Hsi-kai where Père Goudot had fourteen hundred converts.

The people Père Goudot ruled with an ecclesiastical judiciousness were one of the numerous Miao tribes of whom I had heard much but seen little. Occasionally they wandered into Mengtsz to barter beaded garments in exchange for iron implements. Their women were noted for their complexions and for their eyes, which last were not utterly black like those of the average Chinese, but slightly pigmented with brown. Nor were their faces so flat nor their noses so spatulate. Their men excelled in archery and their women in weaving. Their little girls did not wear lily feet; on the contrary the Miaos struck me as being super-natural.

They were interested in any friend of Père Goudot's, and they showed this by plying me with innumerable pertinent questions. Was I married? What was my age? How much salary did I receive? Did the color in my eyes burn? How many sons did I want? If I had six, what would I do with them? And so on, until Père Goudot came and rescued me.

The French Father told me he had been with this tribe twelve years when, one day, he conceived the notion of photographing some of the chiefer patriarchs. But he was unable to accomplish this because he could not explain to their satisfaction how it was possible to get

JACK JOHNSON AND CHIEF GERONIMO

IN A MENGTSZ GARDEN

their likenesses into the little black box without transferring also a part of their souls. The Miao chiefs preferred to remain spiritually intact.

It piqued the priest to think that with all his advantages of mind and knowledge he was still unable to meet this childish argument. He told me that three more years passed before he met their objection. One evening, while turning over affectionately the picture of his old mother and father, he found himself nearly inexplicably saying, "Fancy me destroying your souls, *ma mère et mon père*, just to obtain your pictures." And then in a flash the light burst on him.

He carried the picture to the chief men of the tribe, and said, "Can you imagine me, your spiritual mediator and good friend, being so unfilial as to destroy the souls of my mother and my father?"

The chiefs deliberated among themselves for a moment. Then, without further ado, they went about making preparations for the picture. The spiritual content of Père Goudot's argument had won them.

On the morning of the second day an Indian fakir from Khasgar wandered into the village. It seems he had a reputation for adroitness. But neither Père Goudot nor I paid him

attention until we saw some children with a colored poster in their hands. I was curious and went forward to see what the drawing was. It represented the fakir sitting within a ring of fires watching a little boy seated on a coil of rope. "Can it be the famous rope trick?" I murmured half aloud.

I told Père Goudot what I thought it meant and he suggested that we go down to the market place that evening.

Five or six hundred people must have been there, but we saw no sign of the fakir. The Miaos made way for the priest and me, letting us through to the very center of the throng. A circular place had been marked off with little stones, and inside these were a number of small braziers set in a circle. In the midst of these last a rope lay coiled on a red and blue carpet. Beside the carpet I saw a tiny black lacquer seat.

We must have waited an hour before the murmur of the throng rose to an excited pitch. I had contented myself with watching the colorful scene around me. The women were adorned in their brightest clothes. The square little beaded handkerchief-like hats with silver bells on the corners made them look fantastic. The weight of the bells keeps the handkerchief hat from blowing away. The children looked

like veritable flower gardens on the march. What mauves there were! And pinks, and greens! They were like a race of Martians dropped from the sky. And yet I felt strangely akin to them. We experienced at least one emotion in common: that induced by the excitement of waiting for the fakir.

Finally he came, clothed like a Persian prince. He was leading an Indian child of five years by the hand. The child cowered before the sea of staring eyes. The fakir lifted the child and placed him squarely on the coil of rope, his legs folded under him, his hands with the palms turned upwards, one on the other. Then the fakir drew a glowing torch from the folds of his gown, blew on it until it burst into flame, and lighted the braziers.

A fairy blue smoke curled lazily out, seeming to fall upwards. For a moment the incense burned like jets of oil. And then the smoke expanded into clouds that nearly obscured the little boy on the fanciful carpet. I could barely make him out like a blot through the blue. The fakir had taken up his seat on the lacquer bench. The delicious incense made our senses swim.

The next thing I knew the fakir was chanting in a low monotonous voice, rocking backward and forward, his arms crossed over his

breast, and his face turned heavenwards. He must have kept this up for fifteen minutes before I noticed with a start that the blot of blue had traveled a perceptible way into the air. Were my eyes deceiving me? No. I saw the child distinctly lifted on the end of the rope, the latter uncoiling itself upward like a curious serpent.

Up, up, the child went. The braziers belched their purple smoke with redoubled energy. I sat in the midst of a purple mist, seeing and feeling purple. The rope went up with graceful insinuations, the child barely swaying on the end of it.

Père Goudot looked at me and I at him. But we said nothing. We were speechless with amazement. The Miaos were speechless too. Not a sound was heard but the moaning voice of the fakir. But I felt the intensity of the moment. The great crowd was on the point of screeching. But fascination took away its breath.

I saw that child disappear in a cloud of purple smoke that lay over the spot like a blanket. The other end of the rope was barely dangling on the earth. It dangled for a instant, and then, the fakir reversing his intonation, it came down again. I watched it coiling itself again as a hawser coils off a

wench. It came down rapidly until the upper end disengaged itself from the purple smoke.

The upper end disengaged itself from the purple smoke but it no longer supported the child. Down, down it came until it reached a point some five feet from the ground. And there it paused, swaying as a cobra sways when music charms its ears. I looked up, trying to penetrate the purple mist above me. It was like an opaque sheet of blue water. Was the child there? What had become of him?

Suddenly the rope slipped down and lay motionless where it had lain before. The fakir gradually ceased rocking. Slowly his voice died away to a whisper and then went out altogether. The braziers no longer emitted their purple clouds, though their incense lingered in my nostrils. The mist quietly cleared away, revealing the starry sky above. That night Père Goudot and I and all the Miaos sought our couches with troubled dreams.

"You think that woman beautiful?" Père Goudot asked of me the following morning.

There was scarcely need for me to answer him. Admiration was written plainly on my features. The person occasioning it was a Miao woman of perhaps twenty years. She

was drawing water from the village well. She balanced the jar on her head, her arms akimbo, and walked gracefully within ten feet of us. She was beautiful. She had that matchless olive complexion so prized by the women of Spain. Dark brown eyes and blue-black hair with limbs that seemed to flow completed the picture.

"Then you have not see Lena?" the priest continued, with a look of incomprehension. I looked at him blankly, so he went on.

"I married her to one of your Pishihchai outdoor men. What was his name? Listrom?"

"Not Listrom!" I replied astoundedly.

"Yes, that's the name,—Listrom. Lena's father is among the wealthiest native princes. Did Listrom choose, he could become a Nabob."

"Listrom married to a princess! Listrom a Nabob!" I addressed these ejaculations to no one in particular, but Père Goudot heard them. I had always looked kindly on Listrom, and especially since our nearly fateful adventure in the cave. I knew, too, that he had married a native woman. But I thought nothing of that. More responsible men than Listrom had acted similarly. But that he should have captured a princess! My respect for him advanced in leaps and bounds.

On the morning of the third day I bade Père Goudot a tender farewell. Indubitably our paths would never cross again. But I had to leave him. For in ten days I was to quit Mengtsz, perhaps forever. And during those ten days, among other things, I had business with Listrom.

I did not know that there was a little lad of twelve, the offspring of the French engineer who had an eye for beauty when the railway was building. The child was named for his father, George. And Listrom, as a part of the marriage contract, had agreed that the lad should receive an education commensurate with his birth. The boy's features were undeniably French, but he had his mother's, Lena's, eyes and her complexion and her hair, and her beautiful radiant spirit which I was privileged to glimpse intimately by and by.

George had been six years in the Xavier school at Hanoi. He had completed the courses there and was ready for something higher. When I got back Listrom told me his story and wanted to know if I could be bothered taking the little fellow to Shanghai. I said I must first see George. To see George was to see Lena, and I was fain to look on a princess once again.

To see George was to love him. Lena met

me with tremulous downcast eyes. Though it was not her custom, she took my right hand in her two hands and pressed it with unabashed tenderness. She was not unmindful of the favor I had to bestow. The moment I saw them, I turned and smiled to Listrom, conveying my assent to his proposition with my eyes.

Lena was wearing a cloak of old rose when she came down the walk to meet me, leading George by the hand. There was something heavenly about her face, as there is about the faces of Angelo's children. As I reminded myself of her story, I thought of one of Barrie's felicitous phrasings,—"The finest thing in the world is that a woman can pass through anything and remain pure." Lena exemplified the truth of this as no one else I have ever known.

Finally the last morning came. I rose early and walked around my gardens with unfeigned emotion. Had it been a wet dreary day I might have been consoled. But I was at a loss how I should live separated from this exquisite beauty of nature. The red mountains gleamed through the eucalyptus trees. The warm air pulsed on my cheek like the touch of loving fingers.

My servants fired off crackers as I went down the path for the last time. They trailed

CLOAREC, LENA, AND THE AUTHOR, WITH MIMI, CLOAREC'S DOG

after me like children after a bear man. People lined the edge of the lotus lake and did me a final obeisance. Soldiers presented arms and I felt like a king. I smiled at them, through wet eyes, then clasped my hands, raising them to my breast as a parting salutation. Like Racine I turned to look at the Red Pagoda, flaring above the lotus leaves. Then I passed around the gray walls of Mengtsz city and came to the little depot.

My Chinese staff was there, standing silently apart from my foreign friends. I shook each one by the hand, and then we shook our own. Suzanne, my little French sweetheart of twelve years, I embraced in her own fashion. Cloaree and I walked apart for a moment, saying never a word. Should we meet again? The little train rumbled in. I stood on the rear platform, trying to stem the tears. Mengtsz and the beloved moving forms, with white specks fluttering over them, faded into an indistinguishable gray.

At Pishihchai, Ragot and Listrom were awaiting me with champagne and sweetened cakes. Lena and one of her native maids were to accompany us to the border of the jungle. So the leave-taking would be utterly manly.

The jungle train tumbled down from the Tibetan steppes, panted as if to regain its

breath, and was off again. I watched Pishih-chai until the red tiled roof of the station burned like a ruby in the morning sun. I could visualize Ragot and Listrom standing there. Their trinity was broken forever.

At Yenbai, where the jungle begins, Lena bade George farewell. I had imagined them kissing each other until I remembered that Chinese do not kiss. She merely laid her hand against his cheek, feeling of his beautiful skin, so soft and roseate, like her own. No tears glistened in her eyes. They simply opened wide and would have been staring, had not they been limpid instead.

Lena got down, attended by her maid, who was only a shade less handsome than she, and stood in the middle of the track with the feather palms forming a canopy over her head. I took George to the rear platform as the train pulled slowly out. He leaned against the railing, looking at her with astonishment, trembling with the new emotion risen within him. He had never parted from anyone he loved before. As a child he had not known sorrow. Long after a curve in the roadbed shut them from view, he stood looking into the distance. A little later, when we were settled in our seats, I noticed two trickling tears.

"Why do you weep?" I asked him simply.

"*Pour ma mère,*" he said, cuddling against my arm.

This time we went through the Baie d'Along in darkness, coasting up to Hongkong in a choppy sea. There the big *Empress* awaited us with its palatial grandeur. At Shanghai, in the Yellow Sea, I delivered George into the hands of friends of his foster father. The *Empress* slid out of the turgid waters toward Japan. In the morning I thought I saw a line of yellow mist at the end of the wake. But in a moment it had vanished, and with it the celestial glory of the Middle Kingdom. The waves once more curled with limpid greenness and I walked to the bow, feeling a ship's length nearer home.

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